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WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC
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REWIND 2005

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC
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Records Of The Year + musicians' and writers' reflections

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Nurse With Wound
Volcano The Bear
Tetuzi Akiyama

Burning Star Core
Dan Wilson
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The Masthead

Hot on the heels of Einstürzende Neubauten's new supporters-only CD, *Grundstück*, comes *Die Grosse Untergangsshow: Festival Genialer Dilletanten*. The latter is a handsome CD, DVD and LP compilation on Vinyl-On-Demand that documents Neubauten's participation in a revue of West Berlin's sick underbelly alongside Die Todliche Doris, Gudrun Gut, Sprung Aus Den Wolken, future Neubauten member Alexander Hacke, Nekropolis (featuring Mark Reeder, who later founded Berlin Techno label MFS) and others. Translating as The Great Downfall Show, the festival that took place on 4 September 1981 at Berlin Tempodrom laid the foundations for the kind of practices that characterise the best of today's global Weirdness: communal noisemaking on any implement to hand, musical or otherwise, following self-defined aesthetic principles that sarcastically embrace all things diseased, if that's what it takes to upturn the age's suffocating notions of beauty.

These practices are enshrined in the festival's 'ingenious dilletantes' (sic) tag. Though its origin is disputed, it was most likely coined by Die Tödliche Doris's Wolfgang Müller, who later edited a fabulously slippery manifesto, *Geniale Dilletanten*, published by Merve Verlag. Knowingly or otherwise, the Geniale Dilletanten variously fused dada and Fluxus tomfoolery with scabrous punk/No Wave licentiousness to produce the bracing blasts commemorated in this box.

Bargeld was the prime mover behind the festival itself, programming it and even attending to details like performance times and fees. Such entrepreneurial gusto may be at odds with his abject image in 1981 (Blixa is pictured here with Hacke), yet from the beginning there was always a utopian element about Neubauten's attempts to collapse the world around them and rebuild it according to their own designs.

That utopian principle is easier to discern in the DVD available with this year's *Grundstuck*. Filmed at the former East German capital's Palast Der Republik, it documents one of three supporters-only concerts held by the group to finish the album. Here, there's no stage, just Neubauten playing amid their supporters, most of whom have been conscripted into a 100-strong choir and metal percussion orchestra participating in the making of the music. What began as a tight band of outsiders has since expanded through their Internet operation into a global community of outsiders. Finally Einstürzende Neubauten have succeeded in their long cherished aim of collapsing all boundaries between performers and spectators. **CHRIS BOHN**

PHOTO PETER GRUCHOT

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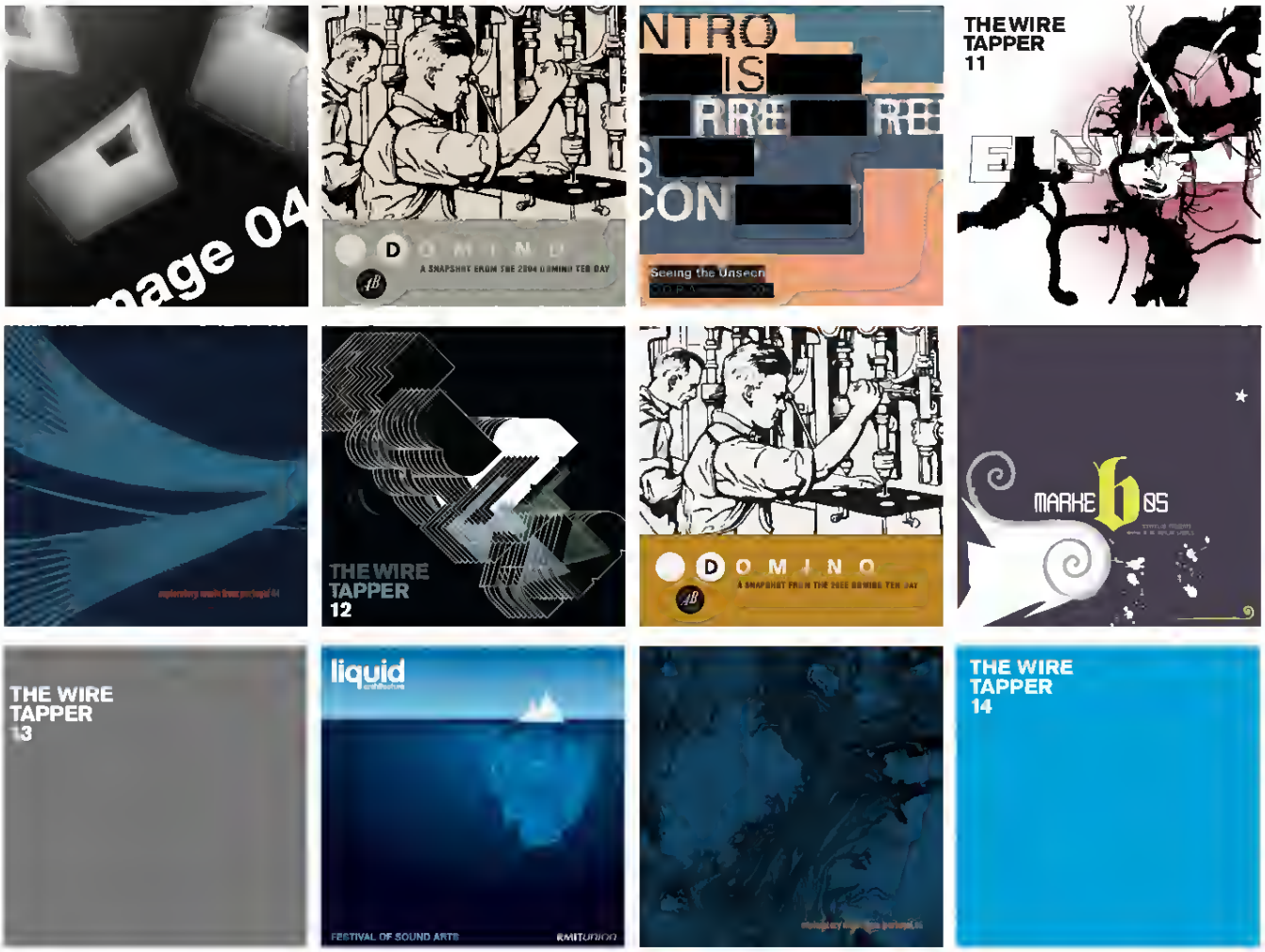

When you subscribe to *The Wire*, not only do you get 12 issues of "the most essential music magazine of the contemporary era" (thanks Forced Exposure, we love you too), you also get yourself in line to receive a series of free CDs that are specially produced for *The Wire* and its subscribers, that are not available anywhere else, and that you wouldn't get if you just bought the magazine in a shop.

For instance, if you were a subscriber during the last two years you would have received free copies of all the CDs pictured above (some of which are still available to new subscribers with back issue orders – see page 99). What's more, if you subscribe to the magazine this month, over the next three issues you will receive free copies of a special DVD featuring work by the artists and musicians that will be appearing at the Sonic Acts festival in the Netherlands (February issue), plus new CD compilations put together by the Belgian Domino festival (March issue) and the Australian Room 40 label (April issue).

Full track listings, plus audio samples, of many of the CDs listed here are available at www.thewire.co.uk/subscribe

Letters

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 23 Jack's Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, email letters@thewire.co.uk

For a few covers more

Great, great spread on covers (Remake Remodel, *The Wire* 261). However, I have but one small addition. Well, not so much small; in fact, it's exceptionally obvious, which is perhaps why it was left out entirely.

I remember hearing John Zorn's cover of Ennio Morricone's theme to *The Big Gundown* at a time when Zorn was to me little more than a skronk sax player and esoteric classical composer, and when Morricone was just a smarmy bleeding-heart component of Catholic apologia like Roland Joffe's *The Mission*. Hearing Zorn's album of Morricone covers, and namely the explosive first track, was a component aspect in my mutual discovery of both the depths of John and Ennio. It babbles and swerves, taking the improvisational heart of Morricone, that simple weirdness of all those Italian soundtracks, and perfectly consolidates it down. The Italian spoken word babble, coupled with those damned powerful chimes and the bare hints of any original melody, and how everything gathers together to those final two minutes, when a torrent of percussion gradually pinpoints to a beautiful and hilarious gallop, complete with the usual Morricone screeching vocals and overdubbed guitar, it all shows what exists at the heart of good covers: the love of the original and the insatiable curiosity to dramatically change it, all in order to prove its basic beauty. It's as if Zorn just took Morricone's heart and let the damn thing do what it wanted. An introduction to Zorn's compositional genius and also the beginning of a scavenger's obsession with Morricone.

Considering how adept Zorn is at referencing and covering material and since *The Big Gundown* is swimming with radical versions of Morricone, I was a little surprised that you left it out. But, whatever...
Benjamin Adams Ashland, USA

Breaking silence

Read Martin Davidson's letter in *The Wire* 261. Yes, I agree: Spontaneous Music Ensemble's *Face To Face* is a wonderful way of playing minimalistically, which influenced me and others years after the issue of this yellow sleeved Emanem LP. I got into *Face To Face*'s mineral sound during the late 80s with the help of a better hi-fi, but I got the LP in the 70s. *Face To Face* (1973) was the least appreciated vinyl Improv LP of the 70s. But you could join some other names to 'new silence', like 70s bass player and composer Fernando Grillo. His 'reductionist' double bass solo was issued by Cramps. I witnessed Grillo's soft sounds the same night of Maarten Altena's sadistic solo performance in Brussels's Palais Des Beaux Arts (1977). Grillo was dressed like a bourgeois performer and didn't appreciate Altena's performance. Maarten said that Grillo was a big master of the bass. Also, you could describe some of Roscoe Mitchell's solos on *Sackville* (1973) as Reductionist. It is the best feeling of 'silence' I have ever heard on an improvisor's disc.

About Radu Malfatti, I could say that he was one of the quieter players around: listen to the *Balance* LP on Incus or his track on the Bead label *Marsh Gas* LP by Ian Brighton (1975), duetting with Ian's guitar, or his duo with Harry Miller on Ogun's *Bracknell Breakdown* (1977). You would say that he anticipated Axel Dörner's 'psshhffhhfft' decades ago, when you listen to his FMP duets with guitarist Stefan Wittwer and his second duo with Miller on SAJ, *Zweck Nagel*. In 1986, Radu played with Paul Lytton at the Antwerp WIM Festival. His 'elastic on the bell' routine comes closest to Dörner's trumpetism. And in the 90s, he played with Polwechsel.

It's not that I don't like Dörner's *Trumpet* CD. But it is mono-dimensional and the object of a close-miking trick. It sounds beautiful, of course, like a fascinating picture. I don't hear any slight differences between Axel solo and his trio playing on *Contest Of Pleasures* (Potlatch with John Butcher and Christophe Charles), which I like. Listen to Axel's *Absence* CD on Creative Sources with Leonel Kaplan & Diego Chamy: it is only a microscope sort of sound, beautiful but they go nowhere, sorry. I prefer the French HUBBUB, because with them you get the same feeling when you listened to AMM and the Evan Parker/Lytton duet (1969-76) live. They make their sounds evolve and develop like a whole story, where sound events are linked inexorably, and you want to listen to it again

Not like the *Raku Sugifatti* double CD. Of course, I am aware of the true sincerity of Radu Malfatti as an artist: some of his questions are backed by truths and insightful observations. His answers make no sense for me. If he finds some players stagnant, he should write to the surviving Ituri Pygmies telling them that they are stagnant, because they played and danced at the court of the pharaohs more than 3000 years ago. Don't you think that the nowism is typical of the art market?
Jean-Michel Van Schouwburg via email

Before and after silence

I am glad Phil Durrant (Letters, *The Wire* 262) agrees with me about the dangers of using the terms 'old' and 'new'. One only has to think of the world of politics, where 'old' Labour want to return to 20th century economics, unlike 'new' Labour (and the 'modernisers') who want to return to 19th century economics!

I happen to enjoy the whole of Webern's *Op 24*. It's surely significant that the slow movement is only a part of the whole. Most 'traditional' improvisors have also had their 'slow movements', which concentrated on 'timbral quality' – examples can be found going back to the 1960s – but, like Webern, they did not make this the whole story.

In the last few years, I have heard numerous gigs and recordings where the only events were breath-type sounds, quiet scratchings, mechanical playing and/or just looking at instruments. These techniques can be valid in certain contexts, but none of the many austere examples I have heard have convinced me that they alone make a satisfying performance. Both Phil and Sandrine Howard confirmed the point that I made in my previous letter (*The Wire* 261), that things have moved on, and I look forward to hearing more of the results.
Martin Davidson via email

Life of Brian

Thanks to Brian Morton for reviewing Split CD-Rs in the last two issues. Brian ends his review of *distinctions* thus: "How you'd go about sourcing it, though, no idea." Our CD-Rs are available from Staalplaat (Berlin), Metamkine (France), and Verge (Canada). Our address is splitrec@ozemail.com.au.
Jim Denley via email

Though very appreciative of Brian Morton's Jazz & Improv column review of The Gift's *Live At Sangha* (*The Wire* 260), I should point out that the label name was misidentified. The label is actually called BMadish, and capturing William Hooker, Jason Hwang and Roy Campbell's Sangha performance was a wonderful way to document the label's first full-length release. Plans are to follow it in 2006 with completed studio releases by vocalist Ellen Christi and Basehead's Michael Ivey.
Bobby Hill Takoma Park, USA

Corrections
Issue 262 In Soundcheck, Burning Star Core's *Let's Play Wild Like Wildcats Do* CD should have been listed as a joint release between Hospital and RRR.
Issue 261 William Winant informs us that the version of Stockhausen's *Kontakte* featured in Steve Reich's Invisible Jukebox was an excerpt taken from a live recording made in 1977 (not 1997, as stated) with James Tenney on piano and William himself on percussion. □

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With next month's February issue, all subscribers will receive a free and exclusive DVD featuring work by artists that will be appearing at the forthcoming Sonic Acts festival in Amsterdam. Go to www.sonicacts.com to get more information on the festival, and www.thewire.co.uk to find out how to subscribe to *The Wire*

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New items on *The Wire* site this month include the unedited transcript of Phil Freeman's interview with Noah Howard and selected MP3s supplied by Noah himself, plus streamed audio to illustrate our 50 Records of the Year chart Sign up to The Conduit, our fortnightly online newsletter, at www.thewire.co.uk

Adventures In Modern Music on Resonance 104.4 FM

A weekly show of new music hosted by *The Wire* staff, broadcasting across central London every Thursday between 9:30-11pm GMT, with simultaneous streaming at www.resonancefm.com. Shows are then archived at www.thewire.co.uk/web/air.php. *NB From 12 January the show will air at the new time of 8-9.30pm GMT*

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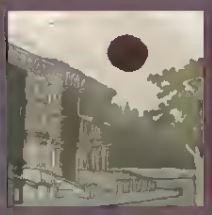

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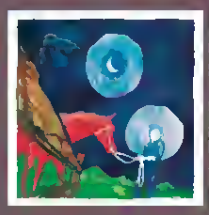

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Bitstream

News and more from under the radar. Compiled by The Trawler

Pandrogyny: Psychic TV (Genesis P Orridge third from right)

Nomatophobia: Foetus

JG Thirlwell, aka Foetus, has been commissioned to write a composition for The Kronos Quartet. The piece, called *Nomatophobis*, will premiere in early 2006. Its first New York performance will be on 7 April 2006 at Zankel Hall, accompanied by pieces by Terry Riley and Glenn Branca. Meanwhile, Thirlwell's latest album *Love* is to be the subject of a remix, featuring contributions by, among others, Fennesz, Mike Patton, Jason Forrest, Tujiko Noriko and Tom Recchion >> **Psychic TV** are currently recording a new album in New York, due for release in 2006 on the Birdman label. Guest artists will include Gibby Haynes of The Butthole Surfers (whose early albums have just been reissued on their own label, Latino Bugger Veil) and Nick Zinner of Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Genesis Breyer P-Orridge promises that it will be "thee ultimate hyperdelic album". Incidentally, P-Orridge has taken on the additional name of 'Breyer' as part of his continuing performance art work with Lady Jaye Breyer (now Lady Jaye Breyer P-Orridge), which is based on the theme of 'pandrogyny'. By merging thus, the two artists show how to transcend the limitations of gender and what they describe as the "fictional self". To this end, P-Orridge has undergone further medical procedures to feminise his features, a photographic chronicle of which is on display at an exhibition in New York >> **Sonic Youth**'s *SYR6*, the latest in their Sonic Youth Recording series, is a recording of their 12 April 2003 concert held at the Anthology Film Archives, in which the group, along with percussionist Tim Barnes, provided improvised instrumental accompaniment to silent films by Stan Brakhage. As with the concert, part of the proceeds of the CD will go towards the upkeep of the Anthology Film Archives, which specialises in the preservation, study and exhibition of American avant garde film and video >> Geneva's legendary New Music venue **Cave12** is threatened with imminent closure. It has been squatting the Rhino building near the city's old town for the past 17 years, establishing itself as one of Europe's most important performing spaces. Concerts are continuing for the moment but the future looks bleak, and any support from *Wire* readers or musicians who have performed there would be more than welcome. Send emails of support to cave12.org@cave12.org >> The new issue of the London Musicians Collective's house magazine ***Resonance*** is out now. Based around the theme of "Locality And Reproduction", it examines, in variously angled pieces, issues such as the relationship between music and electricity, with *The Wire*'s Phil England arguing, for ecological rather than Luddite reasons, that it might be "time to unplug", as an acknowledgement of dwindling energy resources. ReR head Chris Cutler, meanwhile, contributes a piece about the lost impact of geography on musical listening in the age of technology. Edited by Caroline Kraabel, the magazine also features contributions from Robert Wyatt, Evan Parker and Phil Minton, as well as a CD, *CarbonNeutral*, featuring works by Haydn, John Butcher and John Tilbury, among others. The magazine costs £7 and is available from the Resonance FM online shop at www.resonancefm.com >> Make a permanent note in your diaries: from 12 January, **Adventures In Modern Music**, *The Wire*'s weekly radio show on Resonance FM, will be broadcast at the earlier and altogether more civilised time of 8-9:30pm GMT >> Following the release last year of the classic 60s proto-agit punk album *I Don't Wanna*, February 2006 will see a further spate of reissues from the back catalogue of Fluxus stalwart and political activist **Henry Flynt**, notorious for once filling in for John Cale in The Velvet Underground and almost coming to blows with Lou Reed, who disapproved of his "North Carolina hoedown" violin style. These will include editions of *C Tune*, *Raga Electric* and *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues Volumes 1 & 2*, all on Locust >> The ever greater influence exerted by the late **John Fahey** on contemporary music is marked on 14 February by an M Ward-produced compilation of cover versions of his work, entitled *I Am The Resurrection: A Tribute To John Fahey*, on Vanguard. Contributors will include Calexico, Devendra Banhart, Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo and Grandaddy >> The **Contemporary Music Network**, who play a vital role in the dissemination of contemporary music in the UK, is under new management. One of the first tasks the new team has set itself is to make their resources more accessible. And so, over the next few weeks, they're putting out feelers for creative ideas for its touring season of 2007-08. This is a new, 'mountain to Mohammed' approach for CMN. "We want to go where the most interesting music is," says new senior producer David Francis. Those who wish to discuss concepts, ideas or even fully realised shows are asked to contact Anne Parry on 020 7973 6504, or alternatively email anne.parry@artscouncil.org.uk >> In recent years, ***Borderline: Musik Für Grenzganger***, a radio show on the German station Freies Radio Kassel, has broadcast a series of shows based around *The Wire*'s top 50 albums of the year and 2006 will be no exception. The shows will go out between 8-9pm CET, with the first broadcast on 30 December and the remainder on 6, 13 and 20 January respectively. The shows will subsequently be available on Real Audio for 15 weeks at www.borderline-extra.de >> Recent stories about The Fall's **Mark E Smith** reading out the football results on BBC TV turned out not to be a preposterous rumour. Following last year's appearance on BBC's *Newsnight*, in which he gurned and slouched his way through an interview in tribute to the late John Peel, someone at the corporation seems to have taken a shine to Smith, for he was indeed invited to read out the results on their *Final Score* programme. Although he showed a fine disregard for the conventional intonations required for this particular task, his deadpan tones frequently verging on the indistinct (to the exasperation of those marking their pools coupons), he did reveal himself in a subsequent interview, mocking presenter Ray Stubbs for his "prisoner's haircut" and suggesting that the reason for Wigan football club's recent success was that they had emulated the "team spirit" of The Fall. □

SOUND IDEAS

MUSIC, MACHINES AND EXPERIENCE

A BOOK BY ADEN EVENS

Sound Ideas examines the many ways in which technologies shape our experiences of music. Neither a fanboy's tour of some hipster music scene nor another academic attempt to colonize aesthetics by namechecking all the finest theorists, this book looks over the shoulders of engineers, listeners, performers, composers, file-swappers, critics, and instrument-makers, asking how their interactions with technologies of sound affect the music they enjoy, create, and analyze. . .a technological phenomenology of musical aesthetics.

Aden Evens is an M.I.T. professor, electronic musician, and member of re: (Constellation Records).

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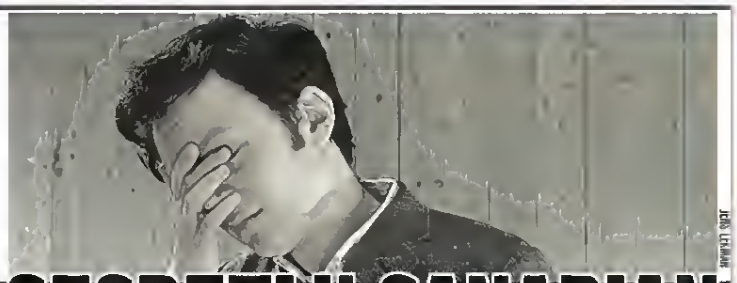

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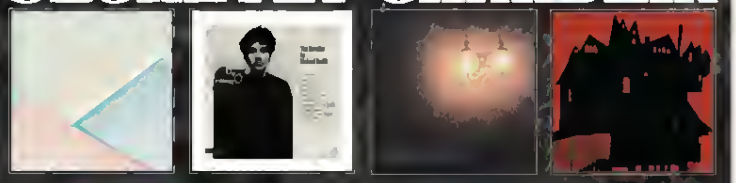

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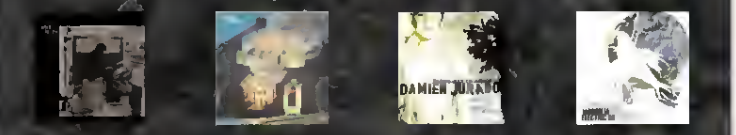

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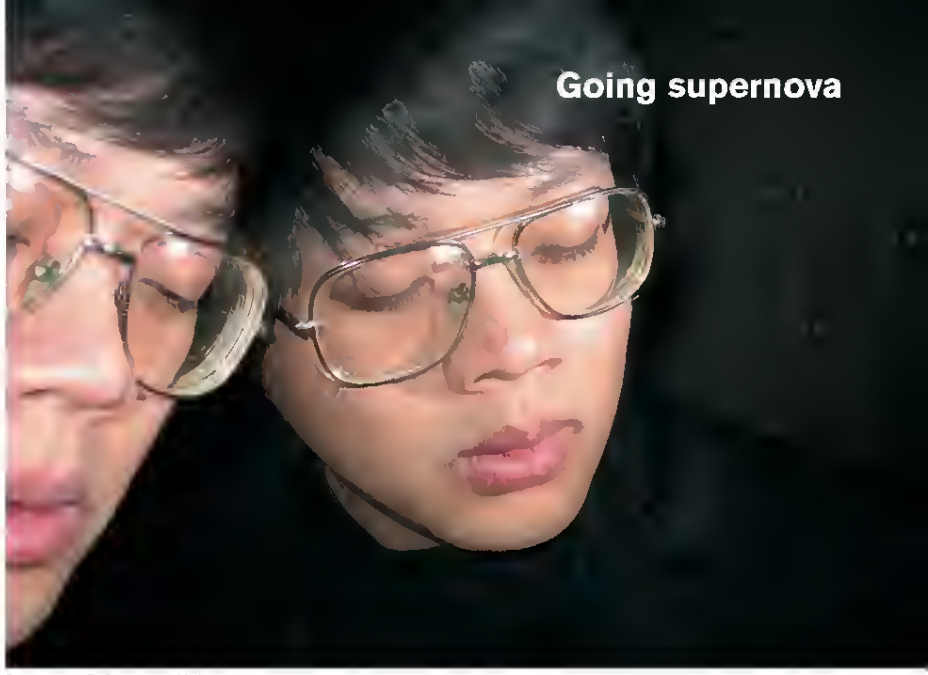
BURNING STAR CORE
By Bruce Russell



Starman: C Spencer Yeh

"I've had to play quite a bit of catch up in the US," says C Spencer Yeh. "When I was growing up, I had to take [English] speech and pronunciation classes. I was thinking a while back that it's actually been an asset for the vocal work I have been doing... that somehow I had to become a chameleon in intonation." Chameleon in intonation in more ways than one, Ohio's highest profile Chinese-American sound artist is undoubtedly Burning Star Core violinist, computer composer and vocal improvisor Yeh.

Some people might view the American Midwest as xenophobic and philistine, but it's also the very cradle of rock 'n' roll. From the rockabilly era onward, vanguard developments have tended to originate on the banks of the Mississippi and the Great Lakes as much as from the Continental coasts. In the 70s, two of the most important ruptures in the rock tradition emerged respectively from Michigan and Ohio: The Stooges and Pere Ubu. In the underground ferment of the post-post No Wave noise scene, their contemporary equivalents are clearly Wolf Eyes and Burning Star Core.

C Spencer Yeh is the cosmonaut of sound behind the fluidly framed outfit usually abbreviated to BxC. In a scene dominated by collaboration, limited edition CD-Rs, basement gigs and energetic networking in cyberspace, Spencer is a one-man powerhouse of enthusiasm. Cincinnati has been home to this first generation American since the age of five, and Yeh has been playing under the BxC banner or his own name since the latter 90s. Originally from Taiwan via Canada, Yeh took up the violin as a child, but it was only as a teenager that he really began making his own art in the form of comics and home video, until hearing Sonic Youth's *Confusion Is Sex* and Nurse With Wound's *Homotopy To Marie* shifted his attention back to music. "[It] just really scared the shit out of me, and made me think about the organisation of sounds, to achieve certain ends and a certain atmosphere," Yeh says.

From 1993–97 Yeh studied film theory at North-Western University in Chicago, where he absorbed the best that the city's scene had to offer via live shows, the university radio station and an internship at Skin Graft Records. That's not to say he neglected his course work. "There was one professor who was vastly influential in my film studies, Tom Gunning," he recalls. "Studying with him put me on a whole other approach and track, and it's hard not to imagine learning about this medium not influencing my extracurricular research." While at college Yeh returned to playing the violin, and gradually developed the approach to the instrument that matured into the classic BxC sound, which one wag has characterised as "hitting Tony Conrad's mainline sideways".

After college, Yeh relocated to Cincinnati and began to record as Burning Star Core, issuing a slew of titles on his own DroneDisco imprint (selectively compiled on the recent double CD set *Mes Soldats Stupides* on Cenotaph). He agrees that there are similarities between being a member of an ethnic minority in the US, and belonging to a minority sub-culture like the noise underground. "There is often a heavy sense of disconnect," he says. "I'm not trying to cite it as any sort of martyrdom/badge, as I don't feel qualified enough to champion any sort of Asian-American initiative. All that being said, there is a sense of unity when a variety of outsiders meet, where there is a united interest in a certain aesthetic... The High Zero festival [in Baltimore] I attended recently was fantastic for this reason."

Connecting with a varied local underground scene where participants moved constantly between art and music, he began to develop the BxC concept. BxC, he says, "could be defined first and foremost as a project – albeit a project that revolves around myself. However, there have been certain folks I've worked closely with who've helped to develop the ideas and direction further into what it is now." More recently the line-up has solidified around a quartet of Yeh, Mike Shiflet, Trevor Tremaine and Robert Beatty (the latter two also in Hair Police), which Yeh characterises as being "like an open marriage".

The group methodology has settled into a regime of improvisation within certain established limits. "I guess there's a lot of factors involved in the composition/improvisation intersection in the BxC music," he says. "I don't want to pretend like a BxC extended line-up performance is an absolute total explosion of freedom by any means. In fact, the people I work with are capable in pure improvisation, but they also enjoy a degree of definition and composition." Regardless of the extent to which the music is composed or improvised, the quartet audibly levitate on a fairly regular basis, displaying the sort of group mind approach to raising the dead that you *know* you want to hear from any group bold enough to title a piece "Come Back Through Me".

Yeh employs three main strategies: playing the violin, often using outboard effects, composing recorded sounds on computer, and improvising with his voice. These approaches are reflected in both his LPs on the excellent Los Angeles imprint Thin Wrist, curated by Peter Kolovos, an old associate of Spencer's from North Western University. The first Thin Wrist LP, from 2002, features one side each of Tarmac-melting violin action and computer cut-up spew, while the second – 2005's *The Very Heart Of The World* – includes violin-led group explorations, solo violin and the amazing vocal exercise "Nyarlathotep". The latter sounds uncannily like one of HP Lovecraft's evil deities being channelled through a possessed transistor radio.

For all the demonic propensities suggested by such titling, Yeh claims, "[While] I've used vocals in some manner since I can remember, I haven't felt like I've overtly been refining or explicitly working on a style until a few years ago. It was something I would use live-wise on occasion, but I feel like I haven't really begun to put together everything I'd like to do, in terms of vocal-based recordings."

As well as running his own label, promoting shows in Cincinnati, performing with BxC and solo, Yeh also maintains a demanding schedule of extra-curricular collaborations. In the last couple of years he has guested with Comets On Fire, Dream Aktion Unit and Hototogisu; toured as a trio with Paul Flaherty and Chris Corsano; and he's about to go out for some dates with John Olson's all-Improv Graveyards project. Unbelievably he also holds down a day job as a multimedia designer. Yeh himself isn't too impressed with his own work ethic. "I seem to sometimes go through dedicated cycles of consumption then... production," he says. "I would spend a ton of time going through listening and watching movies and music, but then get the extreme urge to put some sounds together. About my drive, or why I do what I do, I honestly just draw a blank."

Among a bewildering mass of planned future recordings, Yeh notes he has started work on a third BxC Thin Wrist LP, a series of solo sessions going by the handle of *Sword Swallower's Opera*, and at least one and a half solo BxC LPs for the No Fun and Ultra Eczema imprints. There is also a potential double CD of the BxC quartet for Chondritic Sound, rejoicing in the positively Ballardian title *Operator Dead... Post Abandoned* – which is pretty much the only circumstance in which you could imagine this one-man tornado slowing down. □ Mes Soldats Stupides *is available on Cenotaph*

BLOCKS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE UNBROKEN CONTINUUM

BOOK + DVD Editors: Brian Marley and Mark Wastell - Published by Sound 323

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Blocks of Consciousness and The Unbroken Continuum explores the work and aesthetic of various cutting edge musicians, environmental/sound artists and noise-makers. As well as profiles of Richard Chartier, The Necks, John Wall and Sachiko M, the book contains explorations of the history and changing nature of free improvisation, of Cage's iconoclastic 4'33", and of where to draw the line between improvisation and composition. There is, in addition, a series of personal statements by almost two dozen musicians, composers and sound artists, collected by Rhodri Davies, plus Bertrand Denzler and Jean-Luc Guionnet interview improvisers about their music and group the anonymised answers thematically. The authors of the principal chapters - David Toop, Clive Bell, Brian Marley, Dan Warburton, Andy Hamilton and Will Montgomery are well-known and respected writers on music/sound.

Machines, noise and improvisation are factors common to all of the chapters in the book. David Reid's DVD selection of video performances also carries this theme. The performances, all filmed during the last five years and part of his growing archive, represent a diverse range of musicians and their musics.

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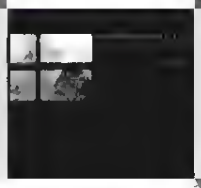

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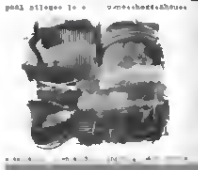

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DAN WILSON
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Merry prankster Dan Wilson

"Hello there, and welcome to a tapedropping," announces an effusive voice as the cassette spools in the tape player. "A tapedropping is where you leave a cassette of strikingly bizarre music in a public place or secreted somewhere. And you've found it, so congratulations. I really think you should listen to all this tape – just make the effort and you'll end up a better person basically."

Of the projects Dan Wilson has been involved in – two long-running radio shows for Resonance FM and the recent release of an album of elaborately arranged songs among them – tapedropping is the activity that seems to excite him most. That proponent of Ontological Anarchy, Hakim Bey, would doubtless embrace the act as an example of Poetic Terrorism, but for the teenage Wilson it was a formative act of subversion that defined him in opposition to the suffocating, all-pervasive values of capital and provided the foundation for all his subsequent work.

In an email exchange (Wilson turned down my request for a face-to-face interview, blaming an "inability to converse in realtime"), he explained why he was attracted to the romance of this apparently futile act. He likened the prank to the burgeoning phenomenon of bookcrossing – the act of leaving books in public for others to read (see www.bookcrossing.com). "I very much admire how bookcrossing aims to restore the human element of media distribution," he says. "But dropping pre-published media is only very, very embryonic of the kind of purely DIY guerrilla neo-folk distribution that I'd like to see one day destroy the music industry so transfixed by capital. I'm certain that we'll see more tapedropping and CDdropping in the near future as the technology gets cheaper.

"Think about it, though," he continues. "Instead of paying money for entertainment, one would simply have to walk outside and look under a bush or something."

The tape that I heard starts with Wilson singing stories of everyday life accompanying himself on rubber-band guitar, unplugged bass guitar or hammer dulcimer. In "I Went To See The Mayor Of Hertfordshire" the mayor taps him on the leg and invites him back to his place where Wilson blows his trumpet for him; while "The Journey From Hell To Heaven And Back Again" concerns commuters on their way to work. Later there is a tape cut-up experiment based around the phrase *"a shockingly large number of people don't attend church on Sunday"*; a multitrack illusion of a group jam by a chorus of drunken revellers (who all sound strangely like Wilson) with pots and pans percussion and wooden recorders (*"Why not come and visit the benevolent dominions of the zombified?"*); and a piece played on what sounds like tuned bicycle spokes.

Wilson started tapedropping around 1998 when he was around school leaving age. "I did a run of tapes with different themes," he elaborates. "Sometimes tapes were given specific themes for their intended targets. For instance, I did a tape full of laundry based music and screaming in washing machines. This was tapedropped at the laundrette. On other occasions I have been more creepy and refined the tape's theme down to an actual person. It's basically as simple as doing some research on a random person. Make a tape about the said person – leave it on their doorstep. Voilà, a personalised tape for Mr Smith featuring various songs about life as a chartered accountant, favourite crisps, the time his wife left him, etc. I remember one response read, 'WHO ARE YOU?' in caps lock."

It was Wilson's prolific years as a tapedropper that provided the bulk of the material for his first radio show, *The Hellebore Shew*, after Resonance FM station staff unanimously seized on his work amongst a stack of offerings from lesser hopefuls. However Wilson had originally envisaged the programme as a weekly showcase for 'outsider music' sourced from material sent in by listeners. "Unfortunately, there were very few contributions," recollects Wilson, "but the ones we did get were mindblowingly lovely."

As for his subsequent show, *Epistaxis Time*, he says, "I thought that I'd take a departure and try 'radiodropping', a show that sounds as if the airwaves have been hijacked by a dangerously berserk person." In *Epistaxis Time*, Wilson claims be taking medication, unable to find stable employment, terminally miserable and verging on the suicidal. "I'm suddenly overcome by a sense of pointlessness" is a typical pronouncement that knowingly pushes the listener's tolerance. But the persona is belied by the apparently undimmed delight in the playful musical arrangements, flights of imagination and the act of creation itself.

Last year Resonance FM founder Ed Baxter compiled a CD, *Tongue Under A Ton Of Nine Volters* from four hours of material that Wilson gave him and released it on his Alcohol label under the Meadow House moniker. It's a more listener-friendly side of Wilson's work, with the songs worked up into elaborate multitrack arrangements. It makes an unimpeachable case for his prodigious talent – one that is always wayward, frequently funny and occasionally disturbing. But, perhaps because it smacks too much of the regular distribution channels that he set out to challenge, he doesn't seem keen to talk about it. "The record is basically just a collection of material originally intended for tapedropping," is all he writes.

Wilson plays everything on the record, which includes a dazzling array of conventional, found and self-invented instruments. "It seemed necessary to find new sounds," he explains. "I've done loads of zither things, some of which I've tried to automate with solenoids and plucking mechanisms. I circuit bend a lot. One nice invention is an old weighing scales which you can jump on. The spindle inside is connected to a floppy disc drive. The audio output comes from the head reader of the floppy drive. So when you jump on the scales, it skims the noise on the floppy disc, and there is a lovely bouncing effect as the scales rattle back to zero."

Baxter notes the young Wilson (about 23 now) has been taking an active interest in the alternative computer interfaces offered by the Dutch STEIM institution; researching electrical engineer Nikola Tesla's patents; and considering self-destructive installation pieces. But when I ask Wilson what next, it's his earlier obsession that's still on his mind. "I'm writing a book about tapedropping and its associated misadventures! I dread what'll happen when the draft's finished... all the horrid bureaucracy stuff... perhaps I'll 'bookcross' it instead!" □ *The Meadow House CD* Tongue Under A Ton Of Nine Volters *is out now on Alcohol Records. The* Epistaxis Time *and* Hellebore Shew *archive is at hellebore.aa.stodge.org. A new series of* Epistaxis Time *starts this month on Resonance FM*

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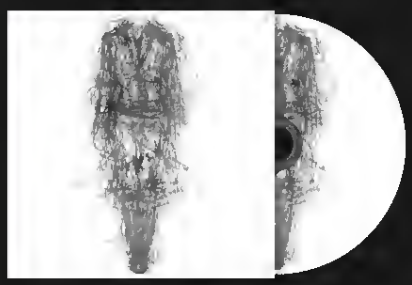

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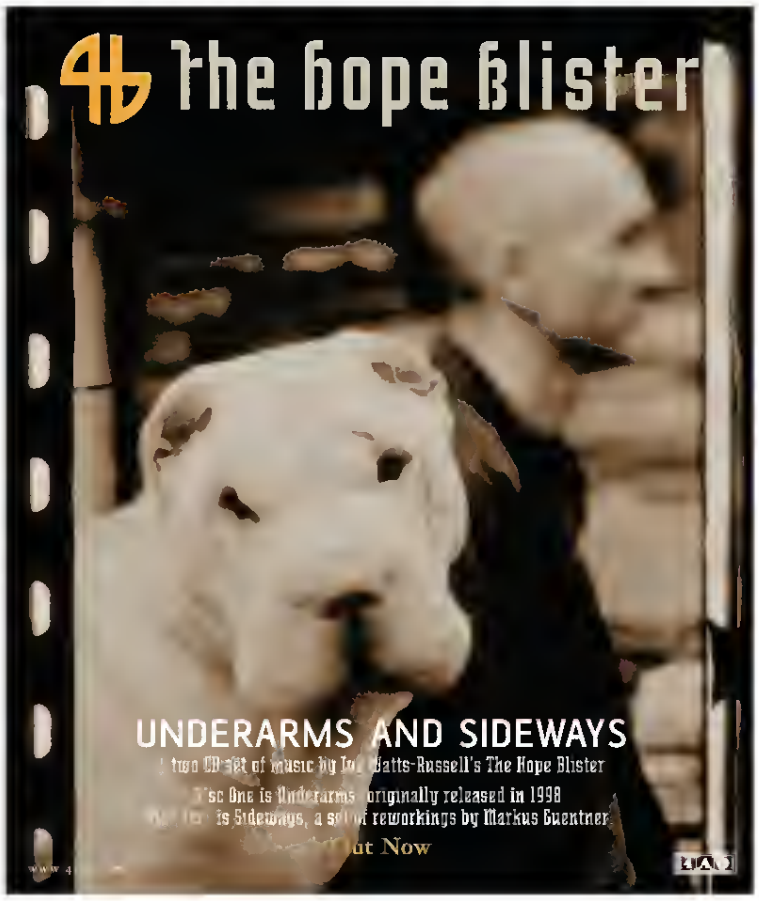

YANNIS KYRIAKIDES
By Rob Young

Unsound thinker

In the zone: Yannis Kyriakides

"We were playing on the beach when the sirens went off," says Greek composer Yannis Kyriakides, recalling the moment when, at the age of five, geopolitical events took hold of his life. "I still remember the day spent during the bombing in a hotel cellar playing with the chalk that had been displaced by the shaking of the bombs, and collecting bullet shells with my brother. The day after, everybody was evacuated. We went to the mountains." Kyriakides is describing the invasion of his birthplace, Cyprus, by the Turkish military in summer 1974, which led to the ongoing stand-off on the island which has been moderated by United Nations peacekeeping forces ever since. The inner life of a UN soldier forms the narrative of one of Kyriakides's latest unclassifiable works for electronic music, *The Buffer Zone*, realised on CD on his own label Unsounds. The Zone is a not inconsiderable area, 180 km long and occupying three per cent of the surface of Cyprus. Originally staged as an 'electronic opera' in a space where the audience is divided by video screens, *The Buffer Zone* consists of processed field recordings taken at sites around this limbo terrain. The narration by an imaginary UN soldier, accompanied by Kyriakides's brother Aris's photographs of dead buildings and obliterated concrete interiors, forms a compelling commentary on one of the longest-running areas of political tension in the world.

Kyriakides settled in London after his family's evacuation in the mid-70s and studied musicology at York University, but he currently resides in Amsterdam. Since graduation he has built up an impressive and formidable portfolio of work, which straddles formal composition, multimedia performance, art installation and digital composition. He studied composition with Louis Andriessen at The Hague Conservatory, where he took part in several music theatre projects with influential electronic composer Dick Raaijmakers, including *Der Stein*, in which Kyriakides was asked to write music based on the paintings of outsider artist Adolph Wölfli. Many of Kyriakides's own works are similarly founded on a solid body of content. Like his compatriot Xenakis, he has explored the effect of mathematical process on shaping musical form, in pieces such as *Chaoids* (2001), which is based on intersecting planes of musical activity phasing over an electronic pulse. His *A conSPIracy Cantata* for two voices, piano and electronics is an act of sonic origami, folding in a layer of shortwave 'numbers stations' recordings with sung verses representing the pronouncements of the ancient Delphic oracle. "I first came across numbers stations in Greece," says Kyriakides, "I wanted to work on pure musical ideas without an end result in mind. At nights I used to listen to the radio, surfing the edges of shortwave bands for entertainment. Here, I would often fall onto what I learned later on was a Mossad transmission. Phonetic alphabet followed by numbers. It was surely a form of communication – both music and numbers station are communicating something, but we can't ever know for sure what they're saying. The sound world and the voices intrigued me and scared the hell out of me at the same time. When I got back home, I found out about this whole subculture of people who monitor these stations, and the availability of these recordings on *The CONET Project* CD [Irdial]."

ConSPIracy Cantata's English premiere took place as part of the Aldeburgh Festival in Suffolk, in one of the abandoned military installations prevalent in the county, the Bentwaters Debriefing Centre, "a spooky place to play," he says. This led to another performance in September 2005, at the offshore military laboratories and bunkers on the remote Orford Ness, in collaboration with video/sound artist Louise K Wilson. It featured a choir singing words written by Kyriakides based on a text by French experimental novelist Georges Perec, and was given the title *U*: "As a pun on his book *W*, but also because uranium was the magical substance that was being venerated in those pagodas on Orford Ness," explains Kyriakides.

He finds a rich seam of material in a variety of philosophical writing, from classical thinkers to 20th century theorists such as Deleuze & Guattari. The "electric music theatre" piece *Spinoza (Or I Am Not Where I Think Myself To Be)* draws on the 17th century Dutch philosopher's "definitions of emotions [from the *Ethics*] and a letter on free will. Philosophical ideas can work well in the context of music theatre or multimedia piece, because a space of ideas is created where one can find connections between things. What inspired me initially was how Spinoza describes emotional states as being movements of different velocities, accelerating and decelerating from primary states. I thought that was such a wonderful description that could be a model for music also; how musical material can be defined solely in terms of rates of change and tempi. How one can describe material by speed alone." Another work, *Escamotage*, is based on quantum physics, while *Subliminal: The Lucretian Picnic*, is a music-video piece based on the Roman writer's Epicurean concepts of perception.

But Kyriakides is no desiccated academic composer writing out of an ivory tower; his work often involves unusual combinations of instruments, vocalists and speakers, and takes place in unusual and unexpected locations and stagings. Even in his 'philosophical' works, he is keen to inject "a certain playfulness and mischief". Over the past five years he has been meeting up with local Amsterdam improvisor Andy Moor, of The Ex, and their guitar/live electronics duos are collected on the CD *Red V Green* (Unsounds). "Improvisation is a vital element of my musical life and health," declares Kyriakides. "I came to improvisation as a violinist, but was never really happy with the function the instrument had within a group – its range of sounds and my own technical limitations. When I started playing sampler, then computer, I relished the fact that I could bring any sound into play in a wide dynamic range." He is preparing a collaborative project with Cologne ensemble MusikFabrik for later this year, in which he will "work out an idea of improvisation that has more to do with memorising a certain amount of material, that is replayed and interpreted through certain rules of behaviour, and that the musicians are responsive to what is happening around them. Moving away from linear organisation to creating a specific 'composed' soundworld and space where the musicians can have more freedom of interpretation without falling into the cliches of gestural improvisation." Just as Kyriakides's world was once reshaped by political events, now he is doing the same through his art. ☐ The Buffer Zone *is out now on Unsounds. www.circadian.net*

PHOTO: ANDY MOOR

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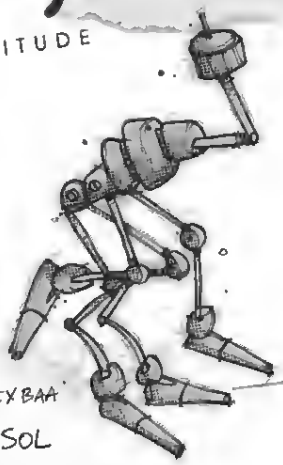

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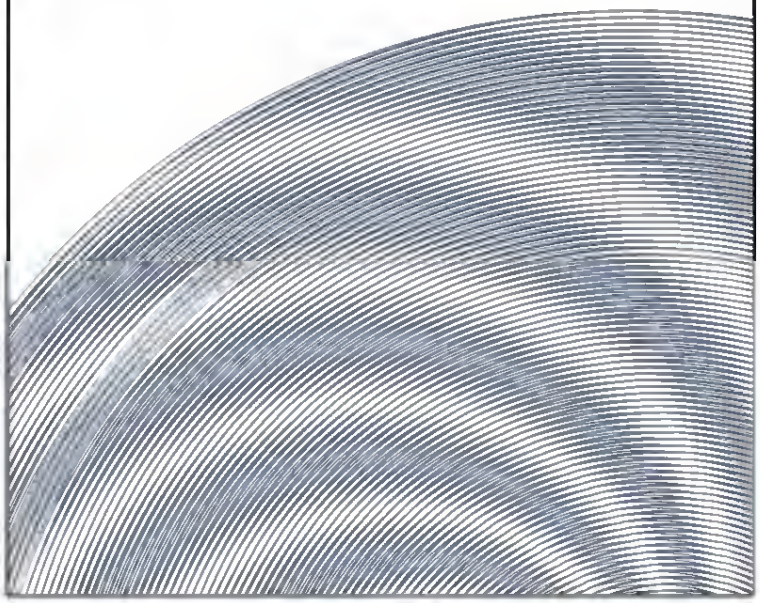

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Marcus Boon goes into reveries over the uniquely Canadian sound of Ontario's Rat-Drifters

Canadian Rat pack: The Reveries (left), Josh Thorpe

"Strange lads," says performer Aimée Dawn Robinson, looking towards the makeshift stage that fills a part of the front room at Tranzac, an Australian and New Zealander social club that is the current centre of experimental and improvised music in Toronto, in particular for the ensembles associated with the excellent local label Rat-Drifting. The Reveries are on stage: Ryan Driver kneels on the floor with a mic placed in his mouth, strumming a quasi-ruler with a very elastic bass sound; Doug Tielli plays guitar and has a noseflute strapped to his face, through which he makes muffled sounds; Eric Chenaux, also strumming guitar, sings through a harmonica that is shoved up into his face.

The group lurch through a set of standards including Jobim's "Useless Journey" and "The Nearness Of You", filled with beautiful harmonics and stuttering guitar sounds that sound like Derek Bailey & The Hi-Los bound, gagged and dosed with sedatives, then thrown into the boot of an old Cadillac, from which they continue to play for their lives. The room is almost empty, as it is for most Rat-Drifting shows, and the bluegrass group in the back room sounds louder through the walls than the guys right in front of us. A Friday night crowd of drunks staggers by the front window, peering through the glass and making faces at what they see. Strange.

Toronto's experimental music scene has always had a hermit-like status in its hometown. (It's also had its hermits: pianist, sometime radio composer and late resident Glenn Gould refused to talk to people in person towards the end of his life.) CCMC, the collective that has included Michael Snow, John Oswald and many other key Toronto improvisors, were famous for weekly shows to a mostly empty room at their performance space, the Music Gallery. Younger experimenters like Sarah Peebles and Nilan Perrera also remain virtually unknown to the city as a whole. Nobody seems too bothered by this. Rat-Drifting co-founder Martin Arnold compares the scene in Toronto to medieval monasteries, which "were fierce places in terms of saving information that had come down to them. There's still that abbey ideal here that this stuff is going on some place and you can join it if you want, but if you don't, it's OK, because it's going to be there anyway. It's a place where you can remove yourself from given strains of cultural production and consumption."

Rat-Drifting began when Arnold, an Edmonton-born composer and folk music fiend, travelled up to York University (where James Tenney also taught, and where I do now) to assist former CCMC member and improvisation guru Casey Sokol in a performance of Cornelius Cardew's *The Great Learning*. During work on the piece, Arnold met a number of Sokol's younger students, including Ryan Driver and Doug Tielli, who all started playing downtown. Through this network, Arnold also met Eric Chenaux, former bassist of Canadian indie pop group Crash Vegas, as well as playing with his own post-rock outfit Phleg Camp, and together, inspired by the efforts of the Constellation and Alien8 labels in Montréal, among others, they founded Rat-Drifting in 2002.

Since that time, Rat-Drifting has gradually evolved into a whole ecosystem of cross-linked ensembles, most of which have produced highly impressive CDs. There's The Reveries' whispery distorted standards on *Blasé Kisses*, The Draperies' synth and guitar Improv on *L'histoire Du Chapeau*, and Arnold's pet project, The Marmots' Scratch Orchestra-like psychedelic jug band on *Treacle Wall*. And then there's The silt, whose two CDs, *Red Whistle* and *Earlier Ways To Wander*, are full of glorious, unlikely rock songs that emerge out of the conjunction of the three improvisors, Tielli, Driver and Marcus Quin, many of them sounding like Neil Young (another Ontario son) played at 16 rpm. Soon to come are the wobbling Beefheart-like big band Saint Dirt Elementary School, The Ryan Driver Quartet, featuring Driver's gorgeous 'Chet Baker signalling through the flames' vocals, and a remarkable half hour reworking of the traditional "Tam Lin" by Arnold for The Draperies and Toronto New Music ensemble Array Music. It all sounds like an imaginary urban folk music – created for a place that has few obvious folk traditions other than native cultures, or the tradition of buying records made in other places.

Chenaux speaks of the label's enthusiasm for improvising around song. "The song is older than anything. People like songs wholeheartedly here. It's a great form for fucking with – and jazz standards allow so much." "Those songs have so many valences," agrees Arnold. "They give you all the lushness and kitsch you want, but they have a history of being improvised on in the most serious way, and a lot of material to mess around with harmonically and melodically. The farther it gets from jazz, the more I like it." Rat-Drifting's most recent success in this song-warping vein is *Flocklight* by Josh Thorpe, which consists of transcriptions of sections of songs by Tom Waits and The Shaggs, timestretched to eight times longer than the originals, which form the basis for a series of remarkable ten minute pieces performed by Chenaux, Thorpe and others on a variety of string instruments. The resulting slow, spiralling melodies sounds like Country 'n' gagaku.

In describing their music, the Rat-Drifters favour words like "slackness", "laziness" and "languor". Chenaux speaks of his love for Cardew, Howard Skempton and Gavin Bryars's amazing *1, 2, 1–2–3–4*, which he's performed with The Draperies, a composition in which a group of improvisors all play along with tapes heard through headphones that slowly go out of sync, creating a strange hallucinatory drift between the different performers. Which is sort of how Canada, a place terminally drifting away from itself, feels too.

"If you live in New York or Berlin or London," says Arnold, "I don't think you can even imagine The Reveries. Chicago and Louisville have histories of music that's unbelievably raw and slow, but it's exemplarily slow. It's not just slow, it's 'Will Oldham slow'. And I like Will Oldham, but it's very hard for an American not to be exemplary. So even if they're doing washed out psychedelic music, it's got to be *the most* washed out psychedelic music, and I think you hear them entrepreneurially placing their imagination."

The Reveries' sound, built around guitars and distorted vocal sounds, strips away most of the obvious signs of a recognisable song, leaving a hazy harmonic fog that sounds at once nostalgic and psychedelic, a distorted, drugged out, improvised memory. As improvisation, each piece retains many of the affective powers of song without retaining the shape or form. Arnold says he's fascinated by "music that isn't meant to be listened to – people practising; lounge jazz at the end of the night when no one's there; Elizabethan consort music, the stuff that was written for amateurs." "Hopefully it doesn't come across as theatre," says Chenaux. "I like the things that happen when you're concentrating on something else, if you're gardening or writing and you're humming or whistling, the way that you make a melody happen when you're not paying close scrutiny to it." □

www.rat-drifting.com

PHOTOS: SAM HIGGS (REVERIES), COLIN CLARKE

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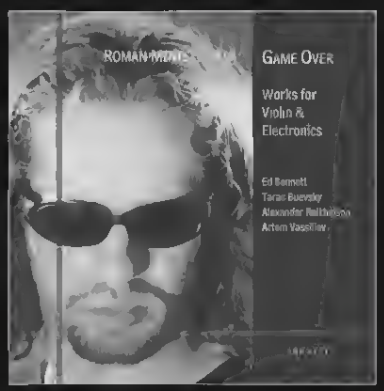

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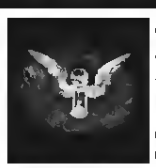

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Tested by Jim Haynes
Photography: Tanya Zani

Steven Stapleton formed Nurse With Wound in 1978 with John Fothergill and Heman Pathak in North London, out of their mutual obsessions with Krautrock, surrealism and avant garde composition, fused with a brash quest for expressionism through experimentation. The trio applied Lautréamont's definition of surrealism as the title for their debut album, *Chance Meeting On A Dissecting Table Of A Sewing Machine And An Umbrella*. The semi-improvised splatter of ominous drone, mangled electronics and piercing guitar shards revealed a creative vigour that far surpassed their collective lack of musical training. The album also came with a curious list of NWW's influences at the time, which has since become a shopping list for rabid avant rock collectors.

By 1982, Stapleton had parted ways with both Fothergill and Pathak, after several records that extended the group's dada approach. However, he continued as NWW's sole protagonist, and also maintained the record label United Dairies, which published the works of likeminded musicians as well as a few Krautrock rarities. The following year, Stapleton met David Tibet, who was in the process of forming Current 93. The two have remained close friends and collaborators ever since. While Stapleton is the central creative force within Nurse With Wound, he has often invited numerous musicians to join him in the studio, including Tibet, Jim 'Foetus' Thirlwell, Colin Potter, William Bennett, Matt Waldron, John Balance, Diana Rogerson, David Jackman and Tony Wakeford.

In 1989, Stapleton moved his family to an isolated farm in Ireland, where he continues to practise his visionary art in music, painting and sculpture. Over the past three decades, Nurse With Wound has produced an astounding catalogue of exceptional recordings, such as the psychologically unstable *Homotopy To Marie* (1982), the Robert Ashley homage *A Missing Sense* (1986), the comical car crash of *The Sylvie And Babs Hi-Fi Companion* (1985), the meditative eeriness of *Soliloquy For Lilith* (1988), the oceanic despair of *Salt Marie Celeste* (2003), and the twisted location recordings of *Shipwreck Radio*, a second volume of which has just appeared on ICR.

The Jukebox took place in San Francisco.

Nurse With Wound's Steven Stapleton in San Francisco, November 2005

GURU GURU
"STONE IN"
FROM *UFO* (SPALAX) 1970

Right! This is Guru Guru, *UFO*, the ultimate stoner album, I would think. It was the heaviest album I had heard at the time. I think this track is "Stone In". The interesting thing about this band is that a couple of members came from free jazz. [Bassist] Uli Trepte and [drummer] Mani Neumeier were from the German jazz scene, and the guitarist [Ax Genrich] came from a band called Agitation Free and gravitated to Guru Guru. Their previous lead instrument was a sax, amazingly enough, considering how guitar orientated they became. Yeah, a fabulous band. I had the privilege of meeting them in the early 70s and I think *Kan Guru* [1972] is possibly my all time favounte album. Actually seeing that band, that chemistry working with Conny Plank was remarkable. It's a stunning record.

You got to witness the making of the record?

I met Conny Plank and stayed with him and he told me. Uli stayed with me, just after.

How old were you at the time?

15. I was a Krautrock groupie.

Did you have any friends into this type of music back then?

Only the other guy who I started Nurse with ten years later – Heman Pathak, an Indian fellow. I would travel around Germany and hang out with all of the bands that nobody was interested in at the time. Bands like Kollektiv, Creative Rock, Birth Control, Kraan and many other bands. We would just travel around Europe. I remember the first stop and the first band was Gilbert Artman and Lard Free in Paris. Then we toured around Germany. There were three of us locked in a Mini. We just got the bug, and I went back and forth to Europe, meeting all of the bands. I designed an album cover for Cluster – the Sowesoso album – but it was never used.

There was a Guru Guru record that came out on United Dairies, right?

Yeah, there was. *Live In 72*. In fact, one side was Guru doing one song off of *Hinten*, their second album, "Bo Diddley", which was extended into a 24 minute workout. The second side was unreleased material that Uli Trepte did with Conny Plank, with members of Thirsty Moon, another amazing band at the time.

LUC FERRARI
"UNHEIMLICH SCHOEN"
FROM *UNHEIMLICH SCHOEN* (METAMKINE) REC 1971

[A woman breathily repeats the title of the track] Is it Brigitte Fontaine?

No.

I'm not familiar with this at all.

It's the late Luc Ferrari. I'm pretty sure this is a homage to Robert Ashley's *She Was A Visitor*.

I really like Ferrari. He was so inventive. Some of his harpsichord pieces were just remarkable. I tried at one point to get him to do something with us when I was running the label in the early 80s. I went and stayed in Paris with Un Drame Musicale Instantané, who were good friends of his. We were doing a concept record together called *In Fractured Silence*; it was a compilation album. We had this sentence, if I remember right now, *"The shells cracked resonating in fractured silence"*, and we were giving that to all of the contributors. We rang up Ferrari, and he was very nice until I told him the sentence. He went berserk: 'This is absolutely fascist! How could you possibly give me a sentence like this? I have no room to manoeuvre! I will not be part of your project!' It was pretty sad, as I had great admiration for him. This is a nice piece, though.

This was released as a 3" CD on Metamkine.

Oh, that's ridiculous. I should have recognised this, as I have it at home, but I've never played it. It's a lovely piece, a bit like that thing I've just done called *Echo Poeme*.

How did you go about making albums such as *Echo Poeme* or *A Missing Sense*?

I've said before, *A Missing Sense* was done just purely for my own enjoyment really. I was never going to release it. I enjoyed it so much that I thought other people might like it. But that was really me just copying Robert Ashley, and I just made a cover version of that fabulous album *Automatic Writing*. But for *Echo Poeme*, I was inspired by the film *Last Year At Marienbad*. I think it's one of the strangest and most peculiar things I've ever seen. It's like watching a dream, and I wanted to do something that could actually be used with the film. You could just turn down the volume of the film and play *Echo Poeme* with *Last Year At Marienbad*, which I've done, and it works beautifully.

***A Missing Sense* was originally conceived as a private tape for your own LSD experiences. Have chemicals played a part in any other recordings?**

These days, none at all. In the 70s and 80s, I used to take lots of acid and smoke lots of cannabis. But I gave all that up around the millennium, and now I do everything straight. But I look back at what I was doing back then and at what I'm doing now, and I don't see that much of a difference. It was a bit of an illusion that the hash was really helping me. I remember when [Coil's] John Balance and I set aside a week to make an album together once. We worked hard on it up at Colin Potter's studio in Yorkshire. He was taking lots of drugs at the time, and it was kind of hard to work with him. After five days of intense work, we just looked at each other and said, 'This is shit, isn't it? Let's destroy the tapes.' And we did, we just wiped the tapes. God, I regret that now. But I remember when I was recording [1992's] *Thunder Perfect Mind*, and I was just in the right frame of mind to mix certain parts of that album. Balance came out with a pill and said, 'You've got to mix it with this. It's just amazing!' I asked him what it was, and he said, 'Look, I'm not going to tell you. Just take this.' So stupidly, I took the pill. Within five minutes my head had completely cleared. It was this weird designer drug that kind of enhances nothing. It wiped all of the alcohol I had in my body and the cannabis, and I couldn't do any mixing. It was ridiculous. I had no feel for it.

How did the recording sessions go for *Thunder Perfect Mind*?

I was really fed up with being labelled 'Industrial'. I just wanted to make the ultimate Industrial piece of music. Which I think I did with "Cold". Heavy, drilling, metallic, factory noises. Real Industrial music, as opposed to Genesis P-Orridge's idea of Industrial. Almost Russolo Industrial. Futurist. I just wanted to get it out of my system, really.

How do those ideas relate to the title, which was derived from an arcane Gnostic text?

It doesn't relate to that. Tibet and I had been working on the Current 93 album *Thunder Perfect Mind*, and we had spent a couple of months on that. I had a dream that I finished a Nurse album with the same title. So the idea came about to put them both out at the same time as sister albums. We took a couple of minutes of each recording and swapped them over. So there's two minutes of the Current album that ended up on the Nurse album and vice versa. It's amazing how many people don't notice that.

Do you share any of Tibet's interest in Gnosticism?

No. We don't agree on anything. We have completely opposite tastes in almost everything. It's probably why we get on so well.

METGUMBNERBONE
"UNTITLED"
FROM *LIGELIAHORN* (A-MISSION) 1982

I know that this sounds completely ridiculous, but is this me?

No.
It sounds incredibly like parts of *Homotopy To Marie*.
It's a side project of a group that you released on United Dairies.
Organum?
No, although one member has been part of Organum.
It's really lovely. My God! It's so similar to *Homotopy*! What is it?
It's Metgumbnerbone, a very obscure underground outfit from Newcastle.
My God, it's [Richard] Rupenus [laughs]. He's an interesting fellow, a strange man. I love his early projects, [like] The Funeral Dance Party, and the Bladder Flask album *One Day I Was So Sad The Corners of My Mouth Met And Everybody Thought I Was Whistling*. What a great title, perhaps my favourite ever. That is a total classic title. I would almost swear that's my creaking chair in this recording.
How did United Dairies function when you ran it?
It didn't really function. It just hobbled along. I had romantic visions about running a record label, but in the end it was hell. I hated running a record label. I did it for ten years. Really it was just a matter of putting out things that were fantastic that nobody would be interested in releasing. It was before a lot of the other avant garde contemporary labels. So we didn't get a lot of press coverage. It was great fun picking the music and meeting the people, but the business side of it sucked. There was an early German label called Ohr, which inspired me so much as a teenager. I would have all of the releases in front of me, and I thought to myself, one day, I want to create a record label that's as interesting and fascinating as this one.
I think you have.
I tried hard, but I don't think I've quite succeeded. I was inspired by that bulk of work. Rolf Ulrich Kaiser, that's the fellow who ran the label, but he went up his own arse and created the Ohr Cosmic Music label, and started marketing everything as 'cosmic' and 'inspired by Timothy Leary'. I think he lost the plot and just saw dollars. But I think the first five years of Ohr were so inspiring. All those albums have gone on to be legendary classics by now: Limbus's *4 Mandalas*, the first two Guru Guru albums, the first Anima album, Tangerine Dream's *Electronic Meditation*, Klaus Schulze's *Irrlicht*, the second Ash Ra Tempel record being one of the darkest records I've ever heard.

INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER
"I MOURN YOU"
FROM *SOV GOTT ROSE-MARIE* (SILENCE) 1969

I wonder when you're going to play me an easy one! [Music fades in slowly] I instantly recognise it, I can't think who it is
It's Swedish.
Ah, right. This is International Harvester. Yeah, they were a beautiful band. *Sov Gott Rose-Marie* is a masterpiece, a beautiful record. There was a time, a few years ago, when I was disenchanted with all music. I just reached saturation in the 90s. I was totally fed up with music. The only things I was playing were the primitive Amon Düül drum workouts and Harvester. I would play this stuff endlessly. Unfortunately, they had always put some dodgy cover versions on their later recordings, but within some of their slow sluggish jamming and the monotony of their 20 minute versions of "All Along The Watchtower", they had something. I'm not quite sure what it is, but, along with Hawkwind, they must be the ultimate festival band. I've never seen them perform. But this could be one of those early Amon Düül records. This section right here is just like *Psychedelic Underground*. I love that free jamming aspect of it, and in Scandinavia there were a lot of bands that were doing that at the time, like Flasket Brinner.
Have you followed much of the recent Finnish scene? There seems to be a lot of similarities between what the Finns are doing and what Amon Düül were doing back in the day.
Colin Potter is mad for that kind of music, and he occasionally sends me some things. But I don't know a great deal about it. Did you ever hear Hapshash & The Coloured Coat?
No.
Right. I thought initially that those early jamming bands like Amon Düül were completely unique. When I first heard *Psychedelic Underground*, it struck me that there hadn't been anything like this before. It's completely on its own. It's just a bunch of hippies getting together and jamming it out. As more Amon Düül albums came out and they were equally as freeform, jamming with seemingly no musical credibility whatsoever, I thought this was amazing. It was total outsider music! Then I found out by talking to some of the guys in the band, that they were just copying another band. In 1966 or 67, there was a band in London called Hapshash & The Coloured Coat, and I think they were involved in the hippy publications like *International Times* and things like that. They had this mammoth recording session where they freaked out for an hour or so, cut a section, and released it as an album. It is Amon Düül. At the time, Düül were a political commune. So they got a bunch of instruments and launched into copying Hapshash & The Coloured Coat. That's how it came out.
Had you ever fantasised about doing long drone rock records such as this?
No. I still can't play any instruments. I presume that wouldn't stop me. There's enough people doing it.

HERMANN NITSCH
"MUSIC DER 66. AKTION"
FROM *MUSIK DER 66 AKTION* (ALGA MARGHEN) 1980

Oh I know this, but... [waits a while]
Think blood.
This is one of those Viennese Actionists, Hermann Nitsch. Which one is this is? Is it one of the rituals?
It's *Musik Der 66. Aktion*, scored for organ, synthesizer, orchestra and punk group.
This is a new one for me.
Had you seen any of his performances?
No. This is a great label. Alga Marghen has put out some amazing stuff. But I'm not particularly interested. Recently I was in Vienna and I went to the Actionist Museum they have there. It was quite surprising that 20 years ago, all these guys were extradited or put in prison for doing their performances, and now it's cultural heritage. There's this huge museum, which is totally dedicated to them. I find it a bit weird. In the early 70s, I was really interested in performance with people like Stuart Brisley, who was an English performance artist doing similar things. But revisiting it all and going to the museum in Vienna, I just thought, 'What a bunch of silly sods.' It really didn't move me at all. Seeing the films of the performances lost all of the romance that I thought it had once. Individual stills taken of the performances were far more evocative. Some of the Rudolf Schwarzkogler marriage situations were really quite beautiful. There's one album done by Dieter Roth, called *Berliner Dichter Workshop*, which is one of my all time favourite albums. It's an album of three Actionists getting drunk with a Revox machine. They sing the same song about the blue sky over and over again, each time getting more and more drunk. There's a touch of Gilbert & George about it. The guy who's operating the tape machine can't operate the machine, the more drunk he gets. He's winding backwards and forwards, just picking up snippets of what they're saying and getting bits of reverb and tape echo. It shouldn't work, but this album is absolutely astounding.

KURT SCHWITTERS
"SIMULTANGEDICHT KAA GEE DEE"
FROM *FUTURA POESIA SONORA* (CRAMPS) 1977, REC 1919

Is this Hugo Ball or Kurt Schwitters?
It's Schwitters. Do the surrealists still strike a nerve with you?
They do. Absolutely. I love this stuff. [Laughs] It was great being involved with [San Francisco based occult musician] irr.app.(ext.) because Matt [Waldron] is a great lover of sound poetry, and there's a section of ten minutes of their set where they holler out bizarre pieces of sound poetry. To be involved in that is great fun.
I had heard that those bits of sound poetry were adapted from the transliteration of bird calls.
Yeah, Matt had told me that. I still adore the whole dada philosophy. The collages, the early art is wonderful and just timeless. It's probably the biggest inspiration for my art. Raoul Hausmann was an amazing artist. This is really inspiring stuff.
Would you consider your own house in Ireland something of a Schwitters-style Merzbau?
It's not got to that stage yet, but it could get there, possibly. It's a shame that his house [in Norway] got burned. Or I think it was destroyed in the war, wasn't it? The few surviving photographs of that piece were remarkable.

EMILE FORD & THE CHECKMATES
"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO MAKE THOSE EYES AT ME FOR"
FROM *JOE MEEK PORTRAIT OF A GENIUS* (CASTLE) 1959

[Starts singing along] I love the production of these old records. They sound so beautiful.
This was compiled on a Joe Meek anthology, as he was the engineer for this track.
He was a fascinating guy. He was a North Londoner and I was a North Londoner. In the 80s, I went on a pilgrimage to his studio, to the shop on Archway Road, just so that I could say that I stood outside of Joe Meek's place. The Blue Men's *I Hear A New World* [1960] is one peculiar record.
If I'm not mistaken, somebody was slurring this song on *Sylvie And Babs*.
Yeah, that's right. That was Peter McGee, the engineer of the studio I used called IPS, which is now a legendary studio, but it was in fact this horrible little hole filled with sewage and overflowing drains. But he used to be a cabaret singer before he became an engineer. "What Do You Want To Make Those Eyes At Me For" is one of my favourite songs, and he happened to be humming it one day. I said, 'Stop right there. You get into the studio and sing that song for me!' He did, and we got the first few bars. Then he fucked up and swore into the mic. I said, 'That's it! Perfect! Take one!' He finally got his crooning voice on record.
Was *Sylvie And Babs* a mail art project?
No, not at all. I block booked the studio for a year and a half, just every Friday evening. So, every Friday, I would leave my job in graphic design and just go straight down to the studio. Each week, I would invite somebody different down. Sometimes we would sit and talk for hours, sometimes we'd make a bit of music, sometimes we'd just smoke and listen to things. But gradually over a year and a half, all of the different bits got recorded. It was all physically done in the studio, most of it taken from other records. The idea was that I wanted to make a record where I didn't physically play on it. I was the conductor and I put it all together from other records or from contributions from other people. In the end, I had to play on it, just to link every piece together. Of all the records I've made, that took the longest. It's probably one of the least successful records. But a lot of people seem to really like it. I was

really chuffed when I read an interview with Merzbow, where there was a question, 'Did you learn musique concrète by studying Pierre Schaeffer and Luc Ferrari records?' He said, 'No, I learned musique concrète by listening to *Sylvie And Babs*.' I thought that was just wonderful. Thank you so much. But that was such a learning process. I learned so much about studio techniques and how to juxtapose things and how to get things to work that shouldn't work. Just hammering square pegs into round holes, and getting them to work somehow. It was such fun to make that album. When I was up in Seattle, I met up with Smegma and it was their favourite album. They just loved it. The funny thing was that the cut-ups that I used on that and pieces like "Duelling Banjos", were actually inspired by Smegma. They released a single in 1979, but it had some of those sampling loops that they used to do. There was this wonderful loop of somebody saying *"What real difference does that make?"* It was repeated endlessly and I loved that piece. That's how I got into doing cut-ups, through listening to Smegma. And in turn, Smegma were listening to me. It's a really bizarre turn of events.

PÉREZ PRADO & HIS ORCHESTRA
"CEREZO ROSA"
FROM *GO GO MAMBO* (TUMBAO) 1951

Prado. Yeah, he was a wonderful man. This is an odd version of this song. I still love his work dearly. He's the only artist apart from Beefheart I collect everything of. Every time I come across a greatest hits album, I buy it, because every time there will be a different recording. In those days, they didn't send master tapes over. They sent the whole band, and he would record with whatever band he had at the time. And it was constantly changing, so every time you buy a Prado album – whether it's a greatest hits album or a cover version – it's always different. I must have, I don't know, 90 Prado CDs, and hardly any of them double the same song. The guy was so prolific. I think it was Christoph Heemann who told me that somewhere on the Net there is a discography of hundreds of releases. I found this music so inspiring, the way it was constructed, the way he would build things up from a basic rhythm. It's like architectural music in a way.

When did you discover Pérez Prado?

I discovered him in Ireland on an advert on TV for Guinness. Basically, when you pour a pint of Guinness, they leave it on the bar for two minutes to reach a head and then they fill the top up. In those two minutes, on the advert, they're concentrating on: what does one do when you're waiting for your Guinness? They had this guy leaping around doing stupid acrobatics while the Guinness settled; and I thought, 'What is that music? That is absolutely amazing. I've got to find out what that music is.' For days, I waited for the advert to come on with my finger poised on a cassette player to record it. It became Guinness's most popular advert, so the actual single was released. I went out and bought a greatest hits album and was completely obsessed. For three or four years, all I listened to was Prado. "Guaglione" was the name of that single. Apart from "Mambo No 5", that was his most popular piece. After the popularity of mambo failed and he tried to invent all of these other dances, which never really caught on, he went back to Mexico. His son saw an opportunity there to get in and tour America with his own band, playing Mambo, touring North American under the name the Pérez Prado Orchestra. As soon as daddy found out about it, he put a stop to it immediately and sued his own son for copyright of the name. I thought that was quite amazing.

Mambo had lost its popularity. RCA had dropped him. He started experimenting with all kinds of weird music vaguely based on mambo but with different character. There was mambo with harpsichords, mambo with distorted guitars. Some of it was so bizarre. Christoph Heemann and I became rabidly obsessed with these Mexican recordings. They were so bizarre.

LADY SOVEREIGN
"CHA-CHING"
FROM *RUN THE ROAD* (679) 2005

This is a new one for me. I've never heard this. Is this white hiphop?

She's from London.

Right, is it MIA? Or is it Lady Sovereign? I would have known it as soon she started singing. Is this one of her singles? It's very interesting. I like what she does. I love the dirty Grime element to it.

Are you partial to Grime?

I don't know much about it. My kids listen to Dizzee Rascal and I've got a couple of the Grime compilations. But they don't really grab me. I really like Lady Sovereign and I prefer her to MIA. There's an underlying pop element, almost bubblegum, to it that I find irritating; but I prefer the African-American hiphop. I used to really like Missy Elliott. I'm really not happy with what she's done in the last few years. It's sloppy R&B rubbish and overproduced. In fact, she's split from Timbaland now, and it was not a good move. The Neptunes don't make a good job of her production. Their production worked well on Snoop Dogg's *Drop It Like It's Hot*. I loved the clicked vocals, but they tend to over-produce. I don't like much male hiphop at all. I can take the occasional bit of Ludacris as a guest. But I love female hiphop. Across the board, I love the gangsta stuff, I love the sophisticated stuff like T-Love, Bahamadia and Jean Grae. I could listen to it endlessly.

There have been rumours of a Nurse With Wound female hiphop record...

Yeah! I'm halfway through making one. There are several rappers who have agreed to be on the album in exchange for me to give them backing tracks for their own use. That's a great trade. I've put the whole project on hold, as I'm halfway through building a house, and I have to get it finished first. I'm spending all of my time working on my house. When that's finished, I'll get back to music. □

Armed with a guitar, a collection of skulls and a samurai sword, Tetuzi Akiyama's flamboyant and idiosyncratic take on Improv has produced a triumphantly uncategorisable range of work, from barely audible minimalism to full-on boogie. Words: Clive Bell. Photography: Shinya Aizawa

BOOGIE KNIGHT

Taku Sugimoto, Toshimaru Nakamura and Tetuzi Akiyama. They never defined themselves as a group, but this trio of close friends ran a Tokyo concert series for five years (at Bar Aoyama during 1998–2000 and at Off Site 2000–03), and they have had a far-reaching, continuing impact on the international Improv scene. The later concerts, usually featuring a visit from a likeminded non-Japanese musician, were documented on three CDs titled *Meeting At Off Site* (on Improvised Music From Japan). Since they called it a day at Off Site, the three have gone their own ways. Guitarist Sugimoto appears the most conceptually extreme, pursuing his mission of ascetic Reductionism into a galaxy of utter silence and beyond (if that's possible). Since Nakamura first played in London and combusted his monitor speaker into a smoke machine, the filigree feedback of his no-input mixing board has challenged and delighted audiences ever further afield.

Which leaves Akiyama, the dark horse of the trio, the guitarist's guitarist. The man who found a new guitar plectrum designed to strike horror into the staff of the world's airlines: the samurai sword. The man who built a reputation on the subtlest of will-o'-the-wisp performances at Off Site, and then released a vinyl LP of kick-ass, don't-know-when-to-quit electric boogie, that snarls "Sounds Of Hell And Fear Forever" across its centre label. Clearly Akiyama's musical range requires a much wider doorway than most venues offer, if not a course of therapy. But within minutes of meeting him you learn that, neither an effete juggler of concepts nor a chainsmoking Rottweiler, he's an amiable, meticulous character with a gentlemanly manner. He's continuing a family tradition of dignity, honourable conduct and sometimes reckless pursuit of adventure (his uncle died testing a Honda motorcycle prior to a TT race on the Isle Of Man). Akiyama himself rides a motorcycle, has a tall, wiry build, and dresses like a dangerous background character in a Spaghetti Western. His meticulousness extends to the spelling of his first name, Tetuzi. It's pronounced 'Tetsuji', but Akiyama has oddly retained an old fashioned Romanisation of the name that possibly evokes the 1960s and confuses anyone who hasn't studied Japanese.

Our latest meeting takes place in the Brixton flat of Ross Lambert, Akiyama's London promoter, on a sun-drenched autumn morning. The guitarist is in the middle of a European tour, including an Austrian festival of contemporary music (The Arditti Quartet were present) and a sprinkling of Heavy Metal clubs. In Austria, Akiyama adapted a piece for two guitars played face to face with a brass bow paperweight. Originally recorded on Locust Records' *Wooden Guitar* compilation, the live version featured six guitarists. Elsewhere Akiyama has been juxtaposing an acoustic set (folky, slow and personal explorations, as documented on Locust's *Pre-Existence*) with his loud and furious, take-no-prisoners electric set – this latter always under the banner of his patented call to arms, "Don't Forget To Boogie!". The cry is borrowed from Canned Heat vocalist Bob 'The Bear' Hite's farewell call to audiences at the end of concerts.

Whether duetting with Renaissance lutenist Jozef Van Wissem or ripping your ears off in homage to The Pink Fairies, Akiyama is clearly painstaking with his sound – behind many an anarchic Thrash Metallist lie months of nitpicking technical choices. Accordingly, we plunge into a discussion of how to achieve that unforgettable boogie sound. (OK, skip the next paragraph if you refuse to believe that guitar technology is sexy.)

"Previously," Akiyama elucidates, "I used an old 70s Korg tape echo machine as a booster for the amp. It has a similar sound to a reverse tape machine, and in my live show I was trying to mimic the tape manipulation effect on the *Don't Forget To Boogie!* LP. If you switch the echo machine off and then back on, the prerecorded sound rises up in pitch, so you get that 'reversey' sound. But the thing weighed ten kilos, so on tour I gave it up. It feels nice without it. Now I have just one cable straight from the guitar to the amp, it's extremely basic. When you saw me play at Penguin House in Tokyo I used a 70s transistor amp by a Japanese maker called Ace Tone – later some of the Ace Tone crew left and formed the Roland company. It's only about 20 watts but it has a good old rock tone. The guitar was a 90s Gibson, from their Historic Collection series. It's a reissue copy of a 1954 model with a one-bar bridge, before they improved it. It's a very direct system. But I worry that some airline might break the Gibson's neck, so now I use a 70s Japanese Greco, a Les Paul copy."

On *Don't Forget To Boogie!* (on the Texan label Idea) there are moments when the sound cuts out alarmingly, as if overloading the recording system and interrupting the boogie riffs' relentless rush.

"That's not overloading," corrects Akiyama. "Actually, the sound is constantly overloaded on that recording! We had a mixture of two distortions, both from the amp (this time a small 1950s American Supro) and also inside the Sony mono reel-to-reel tape recorder, that's a good combination. Then I said to the guy operating the tape recorder, 'You can stop any time while I am playing' – stop, record, stop, record, like that. And on "Acid Highway", I told him to touch the tape reel. Those guys in the 50s did it, Group Ongaku." This was the Japanese unit, including Takehisa Kosugi and Yasunao Tone, that possibly gave birth to free improvisation as a musical procedure around 1958.

Akiyama continues: "In the 60s many sonic effects were invented: phasers, flanging, echo, delay. They all arose from accidents, basically. For example, say the tape recorder didn't work but they liked it; then later they wanted to recreate that sound artificially."

The cover photo of *Don't Forget To Boogie!* demonstrates Akiyama's love of extravagant, mythical imagery and his close attention to detail. A long-fingered gangster (Akiyama himself), almost swallowed up by low-lit whiskey bar gloom and a wide brimmed hat, stares out at the viewer across a table laden with bottles, hundreds of gold coins, guitar, machine gun, a stack of skulls, and finally, centre foreground, a glass of milk.

"That was taken in a Tokyo bar called B-girl, and we named one track after the bar: "She's A B-girl". My friend worked there and he's a photographer [Takashi Matsuoka], so he set it up. The bar closed around 5am, then we worked. The skulls and Hell's Angels poster were already there, I just brought in the machine gun and 300 chocolate gold coins. In my mind I made up a story for the album: there are two bank robbers, we've divided the money and now he's left me alone there, thinking about the deal. OK, adios! He left his glass of milk."

One of 2005's key records was Akiyama's *Route 13 To The Gates Of Hell: Live In Tokyo*. By including both an acoustic set and an electric boogie set from a Tokyo concert, the album embodies Akiyama's current approach to live performance. The acoustic tracks have a daydream, melodic quality, though the guitar sound is edgy, with a punch. Akiyama explains he put a magnetic pickup on a normal Yamaha acoustic guitar, and then played through his Ace Tone amp. Writing in *The Wire* 258, Dan Warburton pointed out that the album's acoustic half "has more in common with the psychedelic noodles of today's free folk than with the gaunt Reductionism Akiyama and his fellow guitarist Taku Sugimoto are often associated with." A discussion of this leads us back into Akiyama's musical past.

"Before Off Site or Bar Aoyama, I was doing a band called Madhar. We started playing in the summer of 1987, doing a weird, folky thing, just playing in the park. I was singing "Mustang Ford" by Tyrannosaurus Rex. When summer was gone and autumn came, we moved into the studio with electric guitar, bass and drums. Next spring we went back to the park again. So the music depended on the season."

Madhar released four cassettes and a video. Later Akiyama met Sugimoto, but the restraint of their lower-case style was a while coming. What they were up to in 1995 can be heard on the PSF psychedelic sampler

I've got levitation: Tetuzi Akiyama in Tokyo, November 2005

Tokyo Flashback 4. Teamed with the impressively deranged drumming of Atsuko Ohno, the two guitarists tackle "Hound Dog Blues" with a languid, howling-at-the-moon passion and scant regard for niceties like a regular pulse. Loud, free and moanin', this is undeniably the blues, and it's arguable that in Akiyama's work the blues is never far away. (The album also features Akiyama improvising on viola in The Hikyo String Quartet.)

1998 found Akiyama playing electronics in a Tokyo club called Bar Aoyama, with a group called Trap, run by a trumpeter known as Bucci ("Like Gucci"). A row between Trap and the club owner ended that residency ("He played freaky sax, really in his own way"), but the owner asked Akiyama if he would like to try something new. Akiyama's friend Toshimaru Nakamura was looking for a venue for US percussionist Jason Kahn. All three played at Bar Aoyama, then next month another foreigner was passing through Tokyo, and so the Meeting series began, which was eventually to transfer to the Off Site gallery. Guitarist Taku Sugimoto was brought in right from the start.

"Before that," Akiyama explains, "Taku and I were playing very weird blues and also a Messiaen-influenced quiet duo. Bar Aoyama was a noisy place, alongside a motorway, so sometimes we played pretty loud, compared to Off Site."

So where did that quiet music come from? "Taku did that approach first. We were all very careful about making sound, and by that time all of us were bored with Japanese noise and psychedelia – no more, we felt." Off Site, by contrast to Bar Aoyama, was located in a row of flimsy old Tokyo houses, with thin walls and disgruntled neighbours. "So we had to do it much quieter. It was a kind of coincidence that we had that opportunity to play quiet. A lot of improvising guys can only play loud, with plenty of effects. Someone steals their gear, you say here's an acoustic guitar, they can't do anything. But we were enthusiastic about the space between notes. It was as if we weren't responding but playing parallel to one another – the feeling that we were just letting the music go."

Akiyama confesses to being something of a guitar fetishist, but in his early days he was influenced not so much by axemen as by the British 60s psychedelic scene. Groups like Hapshash & The Coloured Coat, an English trio of artists and designers whose venerated 1967 album rejoices in the title *Featuring The Human Host And The Heavy Metal Kids*. Also crucial were The Pink Fairies, Mick Farren's gang of assorted ravers that embraced members of Tyrannosaurus Rex and Motorhead, as well as former Pretty Things drummer John Alder, aka Twink.

Akiyama's *Route 13 To The Gates Of Hell* is dedicated to The Pink Fairies Motorcycle Club, and features a photo of a languid rocker reclining against a Japanese grave. On the rocker's guitar (it's Akiyama again, in *Easy Rider* shades) are stencilled the words "Think Pink". Behind is the Akiyama family tomb, and the statuette of his uncle wearing full racing leathers finds an echo in Akiyama's Isle Of Man T-shirt.

The rocker speaks: "When I make this kind of boogie thing, I have to be careful about getting a really good, old guitar tone. Because 99 per cent of electric guitar sound I don't like. It's cheap and distorted. It could be the bad influence of punk: no one cares about tone, they think that attitude is everything. On Twink's *Think Pink* album [1970] I saw they credited The Pink Fairies Motorcycle Team Chorus. The Pink Fairies' first album was *Neverneverland* [1971]: that's the sound I like."

Akiyama wrote a sleevenote for *Route 13*, a story in which he rides endlessly under a baking sun, flying down Highway 13 on his trusty machine, a Husqvarna 504WR. Piles of skulls, tombstones, cycling to hell – there's a theme here, no? At first Akiyama plays down the skulls, saying these are just images to produce atmosphere. Devil worship is not on the agenda. The key seems to lie in the centre of the story: "The only thing in my head were the words of my predecessors, 'Experience everything'... Since each person is an embodiment of diversity, humans ultimately aim to break away from humanity. Now I remember, I was searching for hell in order to escape from being a human.

"When I started Madhar, I threw away my previous career," Akiyama continues. "I thought I should start again from zero. We were jamming for hours in the park at midnight, and those very high summer temperatures must have affected us. Later I was interested in meditation, and I read an article by a guy running a meditation class. He just rented a room once a week, above a public bath. But the way he taught was not the usual way. He talked about seeing ectoplasm in the afternoon, alien things. But the most impressive thing he taught related to escaping from being human. We think we are human beings, but who decided that? No one but us. Who knows whether anyone else agrees or not? We named ourselves human beings, but you don't have to stick with that, you can escape from it if you choose. We can escape or we can stay."

So much tension and controversy in today's music arises from relationships between performers and technology. At some shows it can feel like we are inside an old sci-fi yarn in which the machines have taken over, and the barely visible geek supposedly performing is simply doing the bidding of his new masters. Akiyama's "escape from being human" acquires fresh resonance in this context, especially as his playing is consistently identifiable as the sound of a mind at work, a human engaged in physical activity. *Points And Slashes* on Erstwhile is Akiyama's recent duo with German iPod wrangler Günter Müller, a magnificent record, well described by Julian Cowley in these pages as "like staring at the surface of a pool and watching details gradually become apparent as the eyes acclimatise to perception of depth". Akiyama succeeds in blending into this giddy soundscape without ever sacrificing his identity as a player separate from Müller's whirling machines.

One escape route is to imitate the machine. "Fast Machine (For Alan Licht)" from *Route 13* is a pounding fifth chord repeated hundreds of times. Heard live, a heavenly choir of distorted overtones is revealed, a boogie of the spheres sung by boogie cherubim. The sheer repetition, with its constantly shifting aura, promises catharsis and healing. Akiyama: "I try to avoid drinking alcohol before the boogie set. If I drink one bottle of beer, I'm OK for 30 minutes, then when I come to "Fast Machine" and "Don't Forget To Boogie" my fingers don't work well. It's like the idea of Jaki Liebezeit of Can, or Kraftwerk, they wanted to be machines. So in that context I want to be a machine. But I can't do it and I mistake beats, so it stays human."

"Léthargie" is a 17 minute monster of bowed guitar from Akiyama's 2002 solo on A Bruit Secret, *Résophonie*. This is no gentle scrape of horsehair on gut – Akiyama takes a samurai sword, pickups attached to both ends, and applies it to a resonator guitar. It's a simple enough procedure, that can sit alongside bowing epics like Bach's cello suites or 17th century French viola da gamba. But the music pushes beyond normal human range. "I remember we were mastering the track at Taku Unami's place around midnight. When you're mastering, there is a frequency pattern that is a kind of comfort zone for human beings: plenty of low frequencies, and towards the high frequencies the energy gets much less. Maybe this is a natural sound in the universe. Well, this piece was totally the opposite! Very uncomfortable for human beings. After repeated listening, we got sick. Partly from the ears, but more from the skin – it affects your body."

It's 11 years since Akiyama first took a sword to a guitar, partly as a method of generating continuous sound without using feedback, and partly as a solution to the question of what to play solo. Until then, he saw himself very much as an ensemble player, only happy in a group. So he played his first solo concert with a sword, one of several he found in his parents' house.

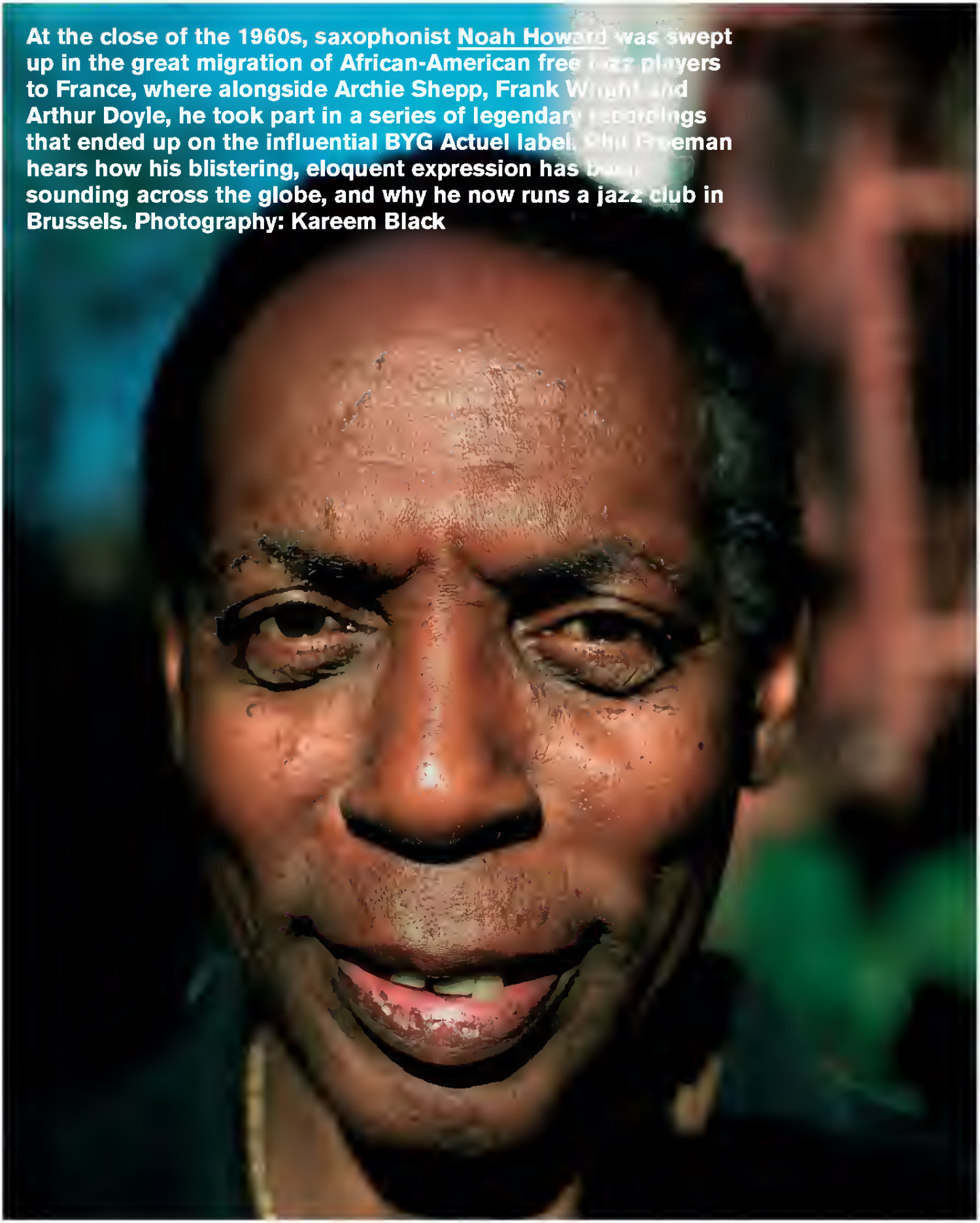
"It's true that my family were samurai in the distant past, but this sword came later, from when my grandfather was practising the martial art iai-do, and doing swordplay accompanied by poetry recitation. So this sword is relatively new, about 50 to 100 years old. The resonator guitar has no pickup, so my idea was to put the pickups not on the guitar but on the katana [sword] itself."

In David Mitchell's highly entertaining multi-story novel *Cloud Atlas* (mainly written in Japan), characters in separate compartments of history, from the 19th century to the distant future, seem to interlink through some mysterious, half-perceived transmigration of souls. A comet-shaped birthmark reappears on several characters as a tantalising clue to their connectedness. I can't help thinking of this when I look at the range of Akiyama's work: from samurai warrior to 60s Brit psychedelicist, from movie gangster to Hell's Angel to high plains drifter. And there's a pair of otherworldly solo releases on Commune-Disc: *Proletarian Blues* and The Rolling Stones' *Wild Horses*, both recorded to a clapped-out mono cassette recorder and sounding like lost ghosts from the 1920s.

A couple of days after the interview, I watch Akiyama play a London concert that includes a trio with Nat Catchpole on sax and Sebastian Lexer on keyboards. Moving quietly and spaciously, it's subtle chamber music, each player leaving considerable gaps in his contribution. But while the others sit still between phrases, Akiyama physically embodies the flow of the piece, extending his neck and rearing like a swimmer, so that watching him you can read the whole of the music. Visibly riding the music, and sidestepping any predictable move, it can be seen why Akiyama is such a superlative group improvisor. His boogie set follows later: surging through a well cranked amp, it's loud enough to cleanse your ears, but not, I would have thought, loud enough to trigger the venue's electronic noise abatement system. So it proves, however, and there is a pause while we watch the moustachioed landlord try to rekindle the room's power circuits.

While in London Akiyama had a meeting with the local Bo' Weavil label. In a telepathic moment, the all-vinyl label contacted him just as he was thinking how good it would be to release past solo recordings on vinyl, and what an impossible dream that was. Next spring, Akiyama's acoustic *Pre-Existence* should join Bo' Weavil's roster alongside Shirley Collins, Sir Richard Bishop (of Sun City Girls), and the ancient Appalachian folk singing of Roscoe Holcomb. Also lined up for Bo' Weavil is Akiyama's new acoustic duo with New Zealander Donald McPherson: "We played in his kitchen and it was kind of magic. Gentle and warm, experimental with a folky flavour." Two official bootlegs are also due, one from Milwaukee's Utech label, the other from Portugal's Esquilo; the latter to include a bonus CD with an early version of the live boogie set. And Akiyama sends out a greeting to American *Wire* readers – he's coming to see you in June 2006, with a 15 city tour, presenting both acoustic and boogie sets. "I never did the boogie set in America before, so I'm curious about the response of the American audience. You know, it was kind of made there..." □ Pre-Existence *is out now on Locust Music*

Akiyama at the Doggie Boogie Bar, Tokyo



At the close of the 1960s, saxophonist Noah Howard was swept up in the great migration of African-American free jazz players to France, where alongside Archie Shepp, Frank Wright and Arthur Doyle, he took part in a series of legendary recordings that ended up on the influential BYG Actuel label. Phil Freeman hears how his blistering, eloquent expression has been sounding across the globe, and why he now runs a jazz club in Brussels. Photography: Kareem Black

Master of his own destiny. Noah Howard in New York, October 2005

"New Orleans musicians are famously insular," David Byrne wrote on his Website on 16 September, shortly after Hurricane Katrina. "Their city loves them, they're appreciated and they work pretty steadily – the food is great, the music has deep roots – why bust your ass for little money taking your music elsewhere? Stay home, make them come to you." Alto saxophonist Noah Howard, born in the Crescent City in 1943, is a one-man refutation of that dictum. Since the mid-60s, he's been travelling the world, determinedly seizing every chance to reach an audience and often choosing to reach new listeners rather than massage the pleasure centres of the same two dozen loyalists every night.

This has frequently meant operating at a very slight remove from whatever scene or group of players was at the centre of 'out' jazz. When ESP-Disk was burning through its founder Bernard Stollman's money, Howard was there, releasing two brilliant albums that featured none of the label's big names. He popped up in Paris in 1969, too, playing on discs by Archie Shepp and Frank Wright. In the 70s, when the scene diffused, so did Howard – he recorded with Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg in Holland, and with Johnny Dyani, Chris McGregor and Kali Fasteau in Paris. He travelled to Africa and throughout Europe, building a small but devoted fanbase and making albums when he could. Along the way, his music changed, gradually but unmistakably. He began playing more traditional hard bop, even infusing his albums with funk and R&B rhythms (and electric instruments). In the 1990s, he re-asserted himself on the revitalised free jazz scene, playing the Knitting Factory and the Vision Festival and releasing albums on independent jazz labels like Eremite, Boxholder, Cadence/CIMP and Ayler. Now, in the new century, Howard is taking his career firmly into his own hands, issuing discs on his Altsax label and running a club, Noah's Ark, in Brussels.

Howard grew up surrounded by music. "If you're a child and you grow up in New Orleans – and I was a child in the 50s – the music was just there," he explains, sitting in New York's Cornelia Street Cafe. "My people came out of the Baptist church, so I was introduced right away to gospel music. When I was a little kid, I was singing in the junior choir, the medium choir and then the high choir." His background wasn't purely creative, though – a fact that would have a substantial impact on the course of his later life as a professional musician. "My people in New Orleans were business people," he says. "I grew up understanding how you do business and have fun. You can do both and be creative. It's not contradictory. Now, it's becoming more and more a reality. At that time, I think I was a little bit ahead of the game."

Howard wasn't always a saxophonist. His first instrument was the trumpet, but he found it difficult to master and packed it in. "I think it's a great instrument, but I couldn't make it," he recalls, laughing. "I admire people like Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie, and all the rest of them who play that instrument. I just couldn't deal. I think you have to be basically crazy to go into trumpet, because you've only got three valves anyway and there's a lot of blowing – it's a whole story. Talk about hard times. So I moved on to saxophone."

When he arrived in New York in the early 1960s, the free jazz scene was already in full creative flower. The revolution that had begun with Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman was slowly but surely becoming impossible to ignore. But rather than imitate other, better known players and thus doom himself to eternal second-tier status, or arrange quickie blowing sessions with the prevailing big names, he gathered a working band of similarly unknown and hungry players, and began gigging whenever he could get a spot. "Slug's Saloon wouldn't give me a week, they would only let me play on Sunday afternoons, and then both Sunday and Mondays, and gradually moving up the ranks like that," he says. "The other guys were a little bit older than me, like Pharoah and all those guys, so they got the big slots." Howard's quartet featured British trumpeter Ric Colbeck, bassist Scotty Holt and drummer Dave Grant – all virtual unknowns. "We were doing our own little thing," Howard says of that group. "Later, a lot of people that came out of my bands ended up playing with everybody else. But I brought them into the scene, which gave me my own identity."

Just as John Coltrane is credited with getting Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp and Pharoah Sanders signed to Impulse!, Ayler got Noah Howard his ESP deal. "Me and Albert Ayler were very good friends," Howard recalls. "And Albert was the star at ESP at that time... [he] was like the Sonny Rollins of this new label that was putting everybody out. So he said, 'Listen, call this guy and go see him.' Bernard [Stollman] was living on Riverside Drive in the upper 90s. Albert told me to send him a tape, so we recorded some stuff from a rehearsal. He put it on and sat there and listened and after about 60 seconds, he said 'So when do you want to record?' I said, 'Excuse me?' This was on a Saturday, and he said, 'Is Monday OK? Are you available Monday at 10am to go in the studio?' So I said yes, and went out shaking. This guy had just offered me a recording contract! We had been rehearsing, the band was together, but it just hit me in the face because I didn't know it was coming down."

The first, self-titled album (also sometimes called *Apotheosis*), recorded in January 1966, is quite different from other contemporaneous ESP releases. Its opening cut, "Henry's Street", feels closer in spirit to the Ornette Coleman quartet recordings of 1959–60 than the Pentecostal blaring of Ayler, Sunny Murray, et al. Howard and Colbeck trade fleet, furious lines as Holt and Grant throb and rattle. The second and third tracks, "Apotheosis" and "Apotheosis Extension I", are more hack 'n' slash, but still convey delicacy, thoughtfulness and reverence for melody, even while Howard is biting his reed and squealing at the top of the alto's range. This two-part piece bravely pursues the large-scale ideas of Coleman's *Free Jazz* and Coltrane's *Ascension* with only a quartet. The final cut, "And About Love", wanders hither and yon for seven minutes or so, with the other three members of the group taking over – Howard's mostly there to restate the "Lonely Woman"-like melody in unison with Colbeck, whose sputtering and breathy solos are the best parts of the piece. The trumpeter's performance on this track encapsulates the entire album's achievement – it has an unmistakable gleam of inspiration at a time when the 'rules' of free jazz were already beginning to ossify.

Howard's second ESP release, the live album *At Judson Hall*, is a wholly different animal. This time, as well as Colbeck, the group feature cellist Catherine Norris, bassist Sirone, pianist Dave Burrell and percussionist Robert Kapp. Recorded in October 1966, less than a year after the debut, it finds Howard and company shifting from contemplation to explosion, twice. Each of its sidelong tracks begins with a meditative, nearly rhythmless exchange of ideas. On "This Place Called Earth", Howard and Colbeck sketch squiggly arcs in the air while Sirone and Norris pluck and drone behind them. On "Homage To Coltrane", the bassist and cellist get quite a bit of time in the spotlight themselves, their two voices meshing perfectly before the horns, piano and drums come in,

and everything erupts. And erupt the music does – each half of *At Judson Hall* concludes with a blowout as fierce as anything that would be offered up in Paris, three years later.

Howard was part of the great 1969 mass migration to France that engulfed Archie Shepp, The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Sunny Murray and dozens of others. "There was supposed to be a Paris jazz festival," Howard says, recalling the now legendary summer, when French security forces, still jumpy a year after the May 68 riots, and fearing that a festival of avant garde music might fan the flames of insurrection all over again, kicked it out of the city. "The authorities moved the thing to the Belgian/French border, to a little village called Amougies – a farm, really, like Woodstock. 30,000 people, I'll never forget that." This festival was the fanfare that began the great (if short) life of BYG Actuel Records, for which dozens of incredible albums by Shepp, Murray, The Art Ensemble, Alan Silva, Jacques Coursil, Don Cherry, Dewey Redman, Sonny Sharrock, Grachan Moncur III, Clifford Thornton and many others were recorded over a period of two years, but mostly in a series of marathon sessions in August 1969. Musicians shuffled in and out of the studio, playing in every conceivable combination and recording tracks that overflowed with vibrancy, passion and wildly expressionistic outbursts. As a result, the BYG Actuel catalogue is stuffed with albums that present avant jazz at its creative peak.

So with all this high quality studio work going on, why didn't Howard record any albums for BYG? "The problem was," he says, "I negotiated with them that we'd come in, play the festival and do two record deals, one for me and one for Frank [Wright]. So they did the Frank thing first and they didn't pay him."

This doesn't mean Howard sat idle during the summer of 1969 – far from it. It just means that, in typical fashion, he chose not to move with the herd, preferring to stick close to the confederates and collaborators with whom he had arrived – Cleveland-born saxophonist Frank Wright, pianist Bobby Few and drummer Muhammad Ali, brother of Rashied. "Being away from home, [the other American expatriates] sort of bonded together," he recalls. "When they were in the studios, they all worked with people that they knew. Whereas I went off into a real strange thing, because when I got there, there was Kenny Clarke and Art Taylor, who had been longtime residents. They had been there almost ten years before I arrived. The first person I got together with was Art Taylor. I called him for a session, because we used to hang out together. So I said, 'Look, I got this session tomorrow morning. You wanna hit it? We'll go in, we'll rehearse for five hours, then we'll tell 'em to turn on the machines and we'll do it.' I wrote the music out, and we just did it. That was the *Uhura* thing that just came out. It's got Frank's name, but that's my session. I did two sessions, *Uhura* and *Space Dimension*. I wrote all the songs." Indeed, the question of why *Uhura Na Umoja*, recently reissued by Universal, was released under Frank Wright's name, when Howard wrote all the music, is an interesting one. In any case, the facts of its creation provide some clues as to why it sounds the way it does. The stripped-down ensemble – Howard on alto sax, Wright on tenor, Few on piano and Art Taylor on drums, no bassist – turns each composition into a pummelling gospelised workout. The melodies are slow and delicate; that's where Howard's influence is most readily apparent. But when things actually get rolling, *Uhura Na Umoja* really is a Frank Wright record. It's unfettered, more concerned with power than poetry – Fire Music at its most paradigmatic and breathtaking. There's a passage near the end of "Aurora Borealis" when Few and Taylor drop almost entirely away, leaving Wright and Howard blowing long spirals of notes at each other, that's one of the most beautiful in all of post-Coltrane free jazz. In fact, it's very reminiscent of similar Coltrane-Sanders exchanges on *Meditations* or various live recordings from 1966 and 1967.

One interesting feature of *Uhura Na Umoja* is the recycling of musical motifs. For instance, the double-horn fanfare that opens the fourth cut, "Being", is almost identical to the beginning of Don Ayler's "Prophet John", heard on the Albert Ayler box *Holy Ghost*. "Prophet John" was recorded at a New York concert in January 1969, by a group that featured Muhammad Ali on drums. Howard was on the same bill, leading a sextet, and the box set's accompanying book indicates that there was some switching of members between groups. Perhaps this accounts for Ali's presence on the track. In any case, almost exactly one year later, in early 1970, *Uhura Na Umoja* was recorded, including this fanfare, which it's easy to assume was adapted from the Ayler piece. The other major example of musical repurposing is "Oriental Mood", *Uhura*'s opening track. It's a rerecording of "Mount Fuji" from *The Black Ark*, the album Howard made, without Wright or Few, in 1969. The *Uhura* version is half the length of the earlier version – more than eight minutes, compared with 15 minutes of "Mount Fuji" – and it's slightly more restrained than the earlier take, with the two horns gently returning to the theme instead of throwing it in as an afterthought to a firestorm of reed-splitting blare.

Another album Howard recorded in the 1969-70 period, *Space Dimension*, is currently lost to history. The disc was issued under his own name, and wasn't included in the first round of America reissues. Like *Uhura Na Umoja*, it featured Wright, Few and Art Taylor, this time joined by second drummer Muhammad Ali.

Howard played on two other dates with this group, both credited to Wright: *One For John* on BYG Actuel (also still unavailable on CD), and *Church Number Nine* on the Calumet label (briefly in print from the mysterious Black Keys label, but now pretty much gone again). In both cases, the compositions were Wright's, and the feel was thus much rawer and fierier. The lack of a bassist makes all the material from this period extremely raucous, with an almost primeval garage band fury. "At that point, we couldn't figure out who could fit into the compositions we were writing, so we said fuck it, we don't need a bass player," Howard says. *Church Number Nine* features only two sidelong tracks – parts one and two of the titular piece – and each is a piano-pounding, lung-busting workout that never flags. Despite moments of real beauty, especially when Few begins sweeping across the piano keys, it can be an exhausting listen. *One For John* is similarly long-winded and equally rewarding.

In free jazz circles, *The Black Ark* is a legend, an album that simply must be heard to be ranked among the truly knowledgeable – and if you actually own one, you're a god amongst men. Out of print since its first pressing, its rarity burnishes its reputation, but once one actually hears it (the tracks are out there in Filesharingland, and two of them appear on Howard's self-released *Eye Of The Improviser* compilation), the inescapable judgment is that it measures up to the hype. Each of the four tracks marries a hard bopper's love of bluesy hooks to raucous, gospelised free blowing and a hint of Asian melody. The group are on tremendous form: trumpeter Earl Cross, pianist Leslie Waldron, bassist Sirone, drummer Muhammad Ali, percussionist Jumma Santos (who had a very good year in 1969, working with Miles Davis and Jimi Hendrix) and saxophonist Arthur Doyle, making his professional debut.

Doyle's playing on *The Black Ark* is arguably the best of his career. As part of a unified ensemble, he's an accent rather than a dominant voice. He's been the same 'technique is for the weak' berserker since day one, but Howard's compositions limit his time in the spotlight – the pianist and even the rhythm players get as much solo space as he does. Furthermore, the spacious mix frequently places him off to the right, so he's sputtering in the corner rather than screaming in the listener's face. "Doyle was going in the direction of Frank [Wright], of Pharoah, of Trane, and he was a young guy," says Howard. "I said, well, fuck it, I'll put him inside my compositions and just let him express himself and do his thing." And it's precisely that containment, keeping him firmly within the limits of *The Black Ark*'s four artfully constructed compositions, that makes it such a powerful debut. Doyle has always needed an editor; *The Black Ark* is one of the rare occasions where he had one.

Howard also did a turn as part of the horn section on Archie Shepp's *Black Gipsy* (Free America 1969). It's one of the weirder (and more beautiful) items in Shepp's discography, and a high point of that whole Paris 69 summer. The fairly traditional sextet line-up (Shepp on soprano sax, Howard on alto, Clifford Thornton on trumpet, Dave Burrell on piano, Earl Freeman on bass and Sunny Murray on drums) was expanded to include Leroy Jenkins's viola, Julio Finn on harmonica and Chicago Beauchamp declaiming a lengthy poem, mixing love and hostility in equal measure, on the title track. Howard recalls it as a "beautiful, mad, mad session" he did "in one of my crazy moments".

After this flurry of productivity, Howard and Wright ceased to work together, though there was nothing acrimonious about the break. Indeed, two of Howard's records were later released on Sun, an independent label Wright owned. "At that point," he says, "we had a split between the direction of the band that Frank wanted to go in and the direction I wanted to go in. So I split and then Frank brought in Alan Silva. That whole thing is a whole other history, of Frank and Alan Silva and Bobby and Muhammad." Wright's Center Of The World group went on to record two superb albums of gospelised free jazz, which were reissued on Fractal a few years ago (see Dan Warburton's Alan Silva feature, *The Wire* 228). Howard and Few stayed in touch, and continue to collaborate up to the present day.

Since Wright's death in 1990, his cult status has grown considerably. Within free jazz's most devout circles he's known as 'the Reverend' and placed on a level with Ayler and Sanders. Howard recalls his late friend fondly, saying, "Frank was an incredible energy source. I like to use the word – and not in a dismissive sense – 'primeval'. He had that kind of concept. He had this rough thing, like an explosion coming out of the centre of the earth. And being that I was from New Orleans, I would put that gumbo sweetening on it, and add some melody to it. So it was an interesting balance."

Howard took a circuitous route back to America, first travelling to the Hilversum studio in Holland (where some of Albert Ayler's earliest sessions were taped) to record "Patterns" in 1971. The half-hour-plus track was initially issued on Altsax, but quickly vanished into the black hole of underground jazz. It was later paired with the 18 minute track "Message To South Africa" (recorded in 1979, but not released at the time) by

PHOTOS: GÉRARD ROUY (NANCY BRUSSELS), VAL WILMER

Clockwise from top left: M'tume, Ted Daniel and Noah Howard in Nancy, 1975, Howard in Paris, 1971, Bobby Few, Howard, Jack Gregg, Frank Wright and Muhammad Ali in Brussels, 1977, Howard (left) and Frank Lowe at the Village Vanguard, New York, 1972

Eremite Records as *Patterns/Message To South Africa*, in August 2005.

When he came back to New York in 1972, Howard took up residence at the Village Vanguard, eventually recording a live album there for the Freedom label. "That project grew out of the old man, Max Gordon, who ran the Vanguard," says Howard. "Me and Max had a thing going on. He said, 'Look, you're not well known enough, but I like you. So what I'll do is I'll give you about 14 Sundays.' Cool, Max, I can build my audience! So I used to do Sunday afternoons there – two to eight or something like that. And out of those sessions I built that album. I had Frank Lowe, who was a really great saxophone player, out of the same tradition as all the other guys I mentioned. I really loved Frank, I'm sad all these people are gone." In addition to Lowe, *Live At The Village Vanguard* featured pianist Robert Bruno, bassist Earl Freeman (another frequent collaborator), Jumma Santos and drummer Rashied Ali. The disc's three lengthy tracks – the shortest is just under nine minutes, the longest nearer to 15 – are typical of Howard's music without Frank Wright. The melodies manage to be gutbucket and technically challenging at once, particularly on opening cut "Back A'Town Blues", and the solos build organically out of the groove instead of exploding in tongues of flame. *Live At The Village Vanguard* is well worth hearing, because it features a rare solo performance from Howard, on "Conversation". Although, like so much of the Howard back catalogue, it's not 'officially' in print, "Back A'Town Blues" appears on *The Eye Of The Improviser*, and the whole disc is available, mastered from relatively clean vinyl, through the CD-R label Phantom Limb.

It's at this point, in the mid-1970s, that Howard's career path begins to get a little circuitous. With many of the clubs and bars that had nurtured it (and ESP-Disk) shutting their doors, the free jazz scene dissolved into the more introspective, less obstreperous loft scene. Many of the older players settled down or left the scene, and new names came in from St Louis, Philadelphia and Chicago. Bigger names like Sam Rivers and Ornette Coleman opened performance spaces in their homes, showcasing music that was often meditative – more Eric Dolphy than Albert Ayler – and willing to revisit the lessons of the past.

During these years, Howard found the artistic atmosphere in Europe and Africa more welcoming. He abandoned America almost entirely, choosing instead to record live albums for Sun and FMP. Thus, it was easy for American journalists to believe he had more or less abandoned jazz, a contention with which he heartily disagrees. "You can go really far out for years and years and then say, 'I think I want to disconnect, go to a different space, sit back and reflect on what I'm doing'," he says, explaining what happened next. "So I went to Africa. You have to look at the whole picture. When you look at the picture of the market, the business part of it, you don't see certain people in certain places, but that doesn't mean they're not playing. They may be playing in places you don't know about. They may be in Milan, they may be in Florence, they may be in Helsinki. People are moving around and they're playing all over the world, but because they're not playing in New York or Paris, that doesn't mean they're not playing. I was down in South Africa, I was in Durban and Jo'burg. Moving around and playing. A lot of times I was moving back and forth between Africa and the rest of Europe. I've been four times in Dakar, in Senegal – they had a beautiful jazz club there. I used to go down there and hang out.

"We're on the inside of this world," he continues, referring to the insular New York jazz scene. "But I'm part of this world *and* the larger world. I'm exposed to the larger world. South Africa is deep. They had all these great musicians down there and they had great studios. Because they had the money. They came to New York, bought all this equipment, and shipped it back to Jo'burg. Studios in Jo'burg are incredible."

While travelling in the 1970s and 80s, Howard began to make music that was significantly more groove-oriented. *Red Star*, an album with Bobby Few, trumpeter Richard Williams, bassist Guy Pederson and veteran bop drummer Kenny Clarke, was recorded on a 1977 return to Paris. Its three pieces – "Creole Girl", "Lovers" and "Red Star" – are, despite their length, head-and-solos workouts that could have appeared on late 60s Blue Note discs. The horns trade fours, the bass and drums swing hard, and Few's piano adds gospel fervour. This doesn't mean it's simplistic, lazy, or unimportant music, though. Along with the ESP debut, *Red Star* is one of the best Howard discs to play to a neophyte, and a superb example of how avant garde ideas can be integrated into more 'mainstream' styles.

In the 80s, Howard explored electronic keyboards and R&B grooves – not to the immersive degree of, say, Miles Davis, but certainly to an extent that might have shocked fans of his earliest work. Howard doesn't care. "I grew up with that sound," he states. "So I was just playing things I grew up with that I always wanted to do. Your creative mind goes back sometimes, and you say, 'I remember when I was really young and I really liked that kind of sound – I'm gonna do that.' Fuck it. You have albums with John Coltrane playing ballads and John Coltrane playing the blues, and he kept on going. When you open the muse box, you have to deal with all your fantasies, the old ones from the past as well as the future. It's a mixed-up tool box, and you call it up when you want to call it up."

In the last 15 years, Howard has begun to stage something of a small resurgence. Not only have some of the records discussed above come back into print, but he's recorded a bunch of live albums and studio dates. He's done two or three discs for Cadence/CIMP and let Boxholder and Ayler release live records (Boxholder also reissued *Red Star*). In addition, he's put out numerous discs, some by himself and others in collaboration with vocalist/poet Eve Packer, on Altsax. The most interesting is *The Eye Of The Improviser*, a two CD-R set spanning his entire career. Tracks from *The Black Ark* and *Live At The Village Vanguard* sit next to cuts from the 80s and 90s, with each disc organised to flow thematically rather than obeying the tedium of chronology. Even in the early days, Howard preferred licensing his recordings to selling them outright – it's part of his overall business savvy, and something that's kept him from being ripped off like so many of his peers. If he doesn't have the master tapes, and the labels don't have the rights to the material, ripping the tracks from the vaults can easily seem like the best option – whatever keeps the music out there. And Altsax, according to its owner/president, has ambitious future plans. "I still have tons of old material," he says, "but now I'm pulling back from that and we're moving towards new material. I see the new age of Altsax as moving more into the Internet phase, working out deals with iTunes. We're moving more into the digital TV phase, where eventually, if we have a concert for example in Chicago, and it's recorded, a week later they could punch it up and get it as video online, downloadable or purchasable on DVD." He's also in the process of assembling a DVD, which he describes as "sort of an autobiographical thing, with a lot of concerts and new music".

Perhaps the most startling development in Howard's career, though, is Noah's Ark, the club he's running in Brussels. "It's an old building," he says. "It was where all the freight would come into the Port of Brussels through the canal. This was in the old days of the steam engine. They would take everything across to this building to process it through customs, and trains would come inside the building and load it all on board. So it's just all these huge stalls. And about seven years ago, IMAC, a group of Flemish businessmen, bought this whole complex – 360 acres of land and all these old buildings, most of which they're going to tear down, but these particular buildings are classic 18th century art pieces, so they cleaned them all up. The top floors are office space, the ground floors are shops and the club. I can get 200 people in the club. The guys that own the whole thing gave me six months' free rent, because one of the owners is a jazz fan and a fan of mine. He said, 'This place is sitting here, it's empty, you just take it and do whatever you want to do, bring in some music.' It took a while to clean it up and do the whole infrastructure thing, setting up the wiring and all. I'd never run a club before in my life, anyway."

Certainly, jazz musicians have run clubs before – Rashied Ali's Alley, Sam Rivers's RivBea studio/performance space and John Zorn's The Stone being three examples. But it seems like Howard has plans that go beyond merely catering to the same 20 diehards every Saturday night. The club's past schedule includes singer-songwriters, blues outfits and 'Latin' nights, alongside weekly performances from Howard's own Migration Orchestra, his latest collaboration with Bobby Few. "The whole thing is not geared toward being just a club – it's a culture centre," he explains. "The whole concept was music, dance, theatre and fashion. We have fashion shows, too, with young, up-and-coming designers. That's let me have a high visual profile. People like it when they come there – it's so different. I understood that, because I come in and out, I see things, I watch things and I diversify. It's not taking anything away [from the jazz scene], because as far as I'm concerned it's all part of the creative experience, giving young people a chance and a podium to do their creative thing. So that's what IMAC and my club is doing over there."

Although he hasn't lived there in decades, Howard retains a strong loyalty to New Orleans. "A part of what you saw on your television screens, with this disaster, is not the real reality of New Orleans," he says emphatically, and somewhat out of the blue. "We had a vibrant African-American middle class, if you want to call it that. But things get very confused in New Orleans, because everybody's mixed up. It's where the races get into the gumbo pot. Everybody's got a cousin [of another race] somewhere down the line. It's a great city and I hope that it comes back – and not as a Disney theme park. Because what made the city was the people of the city."

Before our interview comes to an end, Howard offers me the chance for one final question. I ask for his thoughts on the political conspiracy theories that are sometimes heard surrounding the 60s free jazz scene – that Albert Ayler was murdered by the police, that the US government tried to crush this frightening musical insurgency, etc. Howard leans in close to the tape recorder and says, enunciating clearly, "You are the master of your own destiny." Then he laughs, and keeps on moving. □ *www.noahhoward.com*

Dropping banana skins on the path of progress, Leicester's Volcano The Bear have slipped and skidded to the fore with their dada fusion of folk, avant rock, Prog and domestic noise. Words: Keith Moliné. Photography: Ivan Jones

DANGEROUS CLOWNS

"I might get round to contriving a really good metaphor for Volcano The Bear," declares Clarence Manuelo of the Leicester based experimental quartet. Poking gentle fun at your correspondent's fumbling attempts to get a handle on this most affably elusive of groups, he continues: "I was thinking along the lines of how we are questing musical scientists extracting rock, or is it avant garde cheese samples, from a planet made out of jazz, searching for deposits of pure expression and turning them into high art Improv fuel." Well, that's told me. The fact is, Volcano The Bear have produced some of the finest, wildest British music of the last ten years on record and on stage, but they adamantly refuse to be pinned down. Dogma, they assert, plays no part in their muse. Like This Heat – one of their few avowed influences – if Volcano The Bear had a motto it would be: "All possible processes. All channels open."

VTB have fallen between the cracks. In terms of their heritage, the few that are aware of them can't agree on whether their roots lie in the English avant Prog of Robert Wyatt and Henry Cow, or the DIY post-punk of ATV, European free music, or 80s Industrial noise. Their music, much of it the result of a constant process of recycling itself, varies wildly from release to release, but in a random way that makes it hard to follow a single trajectory. No one can decide whether they are primarily a studio outfit in the tradition of, say, Nurse With Wound, or performance art shamans like Sun City Girls. And of course, all of these impressions are partly true. VTB music is a mixture of non-idiomatic acoustic improvisation, tapework, oddly warped folksong and fun, fun, fun.

Their imminent double album *Classic Erasmus Fusion* on Beta-Lactam Ring (BLRR) extracts the choicest elements of their previous career highpoint, *The Idea Of Wood* (Textile, 2003) and the individual discoveries made on a slew of extracurricular projects, then heightens and expands them into a work of hitherto unrealised beauty and power. Less wilfully mercurial than their previous work, it features fewer abrupt changes of tone and relies less obviously on collage. It stays in one place for longer, exploring each soundworld more thoroughly than ever before. As the group tuck into takeaways in Aaron Moore's instrument-strewn living room after a long, cold photoshoot, they explain why this might be the case.

"I think it helps that it's a double," begins Moore. "We've got so much music flying around that we want to try and get in, or that's how it always seems. In the past few years, because Daniel [Padden] has been living in Glasgow, Nick [Mott] has now moved down to Cornwall and Clarence disappeared, because we can't all be in the studio together it seems this album has more single elements in it." Nevertheless, Moore maintains that collage remains an important compositional technique, as well as being a neat way to recycle musical ideas that have been put aside, their original intentions and contexts long forgotten. "On *Classic Erasmus Fusion* there are tracks where there are different recordings from different time periods that have been collaged together. "Hey Judo", the main body of the song, the folky string twanging, that was recorded, what, four years ago? And the final part, the wine glasses, that was recorded a year ago." After some discussion, the team realise that some of the track's raw material goes back eight years, almost to the very beginnings of their work together.

Moore explains the initial impetus behind the strange practices of VTB. "I think it started as a backlash to what me and Nick were doing in Spine [his and Mott's more conventional early 90s group]. Hey, we're in a band, we have to write these songs, we have to rehearse them over and over again to get them right, and then we go out and we play them in front of 30 people who don't give a shit, and everybody's doing it, everybody's in a band, who are all trying to do the same thing – let's just stop. But we couldn't stop playing music. So we started as a kind of anti-band." Without a healthy local scene to draw strength from, the presence of Leicester's specialist record emporium Ultima Thule was crucial. "Some of the music that came out of that shop was vital in playing a part in our musical direction," agrees Mott. "We became insatiable for what were, to us, new sounds and the possibilities of music. We got into everything from free jazz to classical avant garde to folk music from around the globe to Krautrock, while still loving disco and funk and garage punk and so on. We digested this stuff like children digest sweets."

"Once I got into Prog there was no return," sighs Moore. "I'm a sucker for Prog, I really am, I'm in at the deep end. You can enjoy some seriously bad music if you're into Prog. I really like the absurd nature of it, these four hairy guys in 70s garb playing this overly composed, ridiculous music. But I don't like the mellow stuff – 'lady Prog'." Padden is equally keen to stress the importance of the nascent group's voracious listening habits, lauding The Residents' *Not Available* in particular. "Something clicked. Incredible, really beautiful. Their rhythms, everything's just slightly out, and the way they use the tonality, the tunings of things. They play wrong notes better than anybody." As for whether their early listening can be directly linked to the music they produce as a group or in various solo configurations, they are keen to stress that they don't believe the stylistic connections are strong. "A lot of the time we were doing our thing before we heard a lot of the music that we sounded like," insists Moore.

That distinctive sound, which focuses most strongly on natural, acoustic elements bent into unfamiliar shapes, stems from their earliest experiments. The group were initially fixated on exploring the least likely instrumentation possible as a means of escaping from the straitjacket of conventional music. They weren't simply a rock outfit 'going experimental', but a group intent on discarding all reference points, to a point where everything was permissible. Or, as Padden puts it: "It was like everything goes, and anything goes."

"We just stopped playing instruments," says Moore simply. "We started to play cutlery and windows. I've got a list of all the things we used on a track. Ashtrays, mallets. There was a metal grate outside the back door. It would fill up both sides of the album cover if you listed all the instruments."

"There was a big water pot that we were lobbing apples into," remembers Manuelo. "The egg restrainer in the fridge door made a nice twang. Where I was living was a stonemason's and he had lots of weird stonemasonry kit lying around."

"We'd talk ideas into this dictaphone," recalls Padden. "Coming back from a gig, the drums were banging into Aaron's knees, and into the dictaphone he goes, 'Drums banging into knees when walking up steps is a good sound.' And it was a good sound. So anything became a potential instrument. Things make sounds and noises – we would say, let's try and record this rock. This magnet. And once you get a sound that you can control in some way, you're making music." A case in point is the extraordinary coda to *Classic Erasmus Fusion*'s title track, in which a lugubrious legato moan, sounding not unlike a rutting hippo, is sustained for an unlikely length of time, leaving this listener asking what the hell was that? "Drinking straw through a swanee whistle," comes the matter-of-fact reply.

The group go on to explain how their Year Zero mentality was vital to the development of their methodology. "I think we've always had a really simplistic idea about what's possible musically," says Padden. "We think, 'Why can't we record it that way?' First time we went into the studio, we went in with all our kit and we were saying, 'Can we have a microphone here? Can I hear Nick hitting that spring over there in my headphones?' I think you create your own musical world with its own rules, and then you can do whatever the hell you want. I think all great music's like that." The input of regular sound engineer Kev Reverb (who runs Memphis, VTB's studio of choice) has been enormously important, perhaps surprisingly considering his background (Crazyhead, Zodiac Mindwarp) as the grebo guitarist par excellence. There's a grain of imperfection to the resulting music, a refusal to parade virtuosity that some might mistake for wilful amateurishness, but which actually serves as a damning, if unintended comment on the glossiness of most contemporary art and music. "That's what makes the listener's ears prick up, that imperfection." agrees Mott. "It is ingrained in everything that matters, it's the opposite of conscious."

Moore is more guarded. "We're all very confident about what we play, without being virtuosos. If I'm playing the drums I don't deliberately play the drums badly, I've been playing the drums for 18 years. Small imperfections can be interesting, though we don't contrive them. That would involve too much technique."

"When you're making a piece out of hitting metal lampshades and pebbles, there is no received wisdom about what that sounds like," Padden adds, reasonably. "There isn't anyone doing a perfect, polished version of Volcano The Bear music. There isn't anything to aspire to, or be aware of, even."

More than once, our conversation comes back to the notion of chance or accident, though they are keen to scotch any notion that they are dabbling in highfalutin' Cagean methodology or have a pack of *Oblique Strategies* hidden up their sleeves. "Everyone is free to do whatever they want, so sometimes these things are going to clash, and we'll create great things by chance," explains Moore. "Steve Stapleton [of Nurse With Wound, and whose United Dairies label released the VTB albums *The Inhazer Decline* in 2000 and *The Five Hundred Boy Piano* the following year] was raving about this particular clicking sound," he recalls, "and he's saying, 'I love that sound, how did you get that sound?' And we said, 'Well, we bumped into the microphone'."

"You ought to try it sometime, it's great," smiles Manuelo.

"The way we'll switch something into something else, he's saying, 'How did you achieve that sound?' And we just turned the mic off. Maybe he spends weeks trying to achieve that when we do it by accident." Moore is perhaps selling himself short; VTB, like Nurse With Wound, possess the uncanny knack of placing the most perfectly unexpected sounds in the most perfectly unexpected places.

The use of improvisational and compositional elements, the relationship between them and the way they overlap, is crucial. "All our compositions are based on improvisation," explains Padden. "Composition doesn't start and then stop where improvisation begins." In VTB the improvisation is reined in by pre-arranged points of contact and departure. "They're often based around little events and points where a section runs for a while," continues Padden, "then Aaron starts on these percussive things and we drift into the next movement. Little things signify changes." It isn't always plain sailing, trying to thread

preprepared sounds through the improvisation. They have to be a disciplined and well-drilled unit, just one that is alive enough to the moment to allow for chance elements to direct the music.

Volcano The Bear live is an extravagantly theatrical spectacle, despite their having toned down some of the chaotic 'Artaud meets *Monty Python*' tomfoolery of their early shows. Wigs, masks and wrestling were heavily featured. "It was everything and the kitchen sink back then," recalls Moore. "A gig would start and I soon as I'd hear the first sound, I'd immediately get into this zone, a Volcano The Bear zone, and more often than not I'd almost double up, go down on my knees and start crawling around on stage. It was just the way the music made me react. I'd be climbing over the drumkit or running through the crowd." It sounds like a mixture of dada happening and shamanic ritual, I venture. "There's definitely a feeling of a ritual taking place," Moore agrees.

"I think we make it clear that this is going to be an exciting thing, it's an important thing for us to do this," declares Padden. "I certainly feel that if I've done some of the things I've done onstage with Volcano The Bear, I can deal with most of life's situations. The stage often became an obstacle course we'd try and negotiate whilst still creating music. It was pretty hair-raising at times."

This insistence on pure self-expression has occasionally landed them in hot water. When the group were invited to perform at De Montfort University's Rethinking The Avant Garde symposium in 1998, convened by the late poet and academic Nicholas Zurbrugg and involving a number of renowned Fluxus artists, there were, as the group remember it, "mutterings". "Like, 'They wouldn't have got away with this in the 60s'," grins Padden.

"What's that word they use? Oh yeah, 'disciplines'," groans Moore. "'You use so many disciplines'. What are you talking about, mate? I'm a decorator. People were offended, I think, that this bunch of local oiks could get on this international avant garde festival." And it's not just the art snobs who don't get VTB. "Through our association with World Serpent [the now defunct notorious Industrial/occult music distribution network], a lot of people might think that we're some kind of Goth band, dark and doomy," he moans.

"We're all about celebration!" insists Padden. "It's joyous, what we do, totally joyous. I've never been interested in confrontational music. We sing songs. We stand on stage, and we are singing these really joyous songs out to you."

The folk element in VTB's music has become more pronounced and sophisticated with each release. VTB have received nothing like the same attention that's been focused on developments in the New Weird America movement and the Arctic psychedelia of the Finnish scene. Yet they have spent much of the last ten years producing work equally as adventurous as that for which the likes of Sunburned Hand Of The Man have recently been so lauded. Perhaps because they don't plug into any one indigenous tradition, but create a kind of Fourth World folk music, folk from imaginary lands, their work in the field is simply seen as being less authentic, less exotic. "I don't know what folk means any more," Padden sighs. "It always seems to be qualified these days: free folk, all that nonsense. I've always thought Volcano The Bear has far more in common with dusty, scratchy old field recordings from South East Asia than it does any Western experimental music. Most of my inspiration is Ocora and Folkways and stuff."

The last four or five years have seen each member branching out into various side projects. Moore is involved in a range of solo and collaborative ventures whose only defining factor is how different each one is from VTB. His new solo album *The Accidental* (Elsie & Jack/BLRR), for example, is a collection of meditative, almost static textures. "I think it was an extreme departure for me – being a drummer, singer and trumpet player – to do an album that doesn't have drums or voice or trumpets on it. I used a vibraphone, bowed. A little prepared at times with a chain. And beaten, looped and recorded over in real time. The track "ON/GO" is a loop of the decay of a cymbal being pulled from a bath of water. I liked the idea of the project being very different to Volcano The Bear, very simple, focused and uncluttered."

The formation of Moore and Mott's duo Songs Of Norway was concurrent with that of VTB. The project focused on improvisation, which at the time was a new discipline for them. "We had no idea how to improvise," reveals Moore. "Once a week for the next seven years we taught ourselves. I undid all I had learned as a rock drummer, which was no easy task." The fruits of their labours laid the groundwork for their subsequent outings as a live duo under the VTB banner. All of which makes it doubly strange that having 'unlearned' how to be a rock drummer, Moore has recently established a new rock group, with himself on drums and vocals alongside early Songs Of Norway partner Stewart Brackley on bass and vocals, called Dragon Or Emperor. Though named after a VTB song, it is a surprising departure for Moore, being a kind of mad, twisted reductionist punk power duo that has drawn comparisons to Lightning Bolt. "Stewart has transformed from this quiet, unassuming caterpillar into a manic, warbling butterfly," says Moore admiringly. "Most of the time it's very groove based, even funky in a No Wave or Can-like way." Another side project, Guignol, found Moore and Manuelo collaborating with staunch ally Jeremy Barnes, of A Hawk And A Hacksaw and Babilicon. Together they produced a decidedly lo-fi music of spooked instrumental rustlings, field recordings and funny little songs that come across like old 78s from another planet, and which featured some of Moore's most obliquely fascinating lyrics.

A recent visit to New York saw Moore setting up yet another new project, involving Dave Nuss, of No-Neck Blues Band, who move along parallel lines to VTB. As if all this wasn't enough, he has also been testing his hard-won improv skills as a drummer alongside violinist (and *Wire* contributor) Dan Warburton, Alan Courtis of Reynols, and turntablists Alexandre Bellenger and Arnaud Rivière in a group called The Textile Orchestra. He is due to perform in an ensemble that includes legendary saxophonist Paul Dunmall. A few eyebrows might be raised at that, I suggest, but Moore is as diffident as ever. "I'm not nervous about it," he insists. "I just hope that what I do is good and they enjoy playing with me. I have no idea if anyone playing knows who Volcano The Bear are."

The other Bears have indulged in extracurricular work as well. Mott's collaboration with avant garde fiddle player Aranos was initially conceived as a duo violin project. "It ended up being much more than strings," he enthuses. "I was experimenting with saxophone mouthpieces on pennywhistle and flute bodies, which worked really nicely. The session was recorded and mixed in a week. The vast majority of the music was spontaneous, with few overdubs and little editing. It was a beautiful time, everything sounded fresh and fun." Indeed, the resulting album *Allied Cooking But Not As You Know It* (Pieros 2003), credited to El Monte/Aranos, is a real gem: lush, exploratory and cheeky in equal measure. Manuelo too has been able to flex some musical muscle with his Earth Trumpet project. The self-titled album from 2000 on Cenotaph is impressive enough, and the *Roman* EP, which surfaced in its wake a year later on BLRR, is a phenomenal achievement. It has a woozy, carnivalesque quality and is beautifully structured.

Of all the projects to have emerged from VTB, The One Ensemble Of Daniel Padden is perhaps the most accessible, taking its cue from VTB's warped folksongs rather than their more rigorously abstract work. There have been two albums so far, the self-titled debut arriving in 2002 on Catsup Plate and the extremely well-received *Owl Of Fives* a year later on Textile. "The One Ensemble started as myself trying to create the sound of a mythical folk band that couldn't possibly have existed," he explains. "A lot of traditional instruments were used, though they weren't employed in a traditional way. After the second album came out I was asked to perform it live, and then it became a different beast. The music could never be reproduced, so the songs became starting points for pieces performed and improvised by the current One Ensemble, which is a wayward and tremendous quartet."

The current VTB release is the live document *Catonapotato* (Digitalis Industries/Broken Face), recorded on tour in 2004 by Moore and Mott alone, but along with *Volve* (Volucan/BLRR, 1998), it's one of the group's most powerful live statements. "I love the purity, focus and intimacy on that record," agrees Mott.

"I personally feel that "A Universal History Of Infamy" [from *Catonapotato*] is the best live track we've put out and sums up a lot of what Volcano The Bear is about: a blend of composition, improvisation, prerecorded sound and song," adds Moore proudly.

VTB are one of those units which is in such a constant, prolific state of flux that it becomes difficult to keep tabs on the way they have changed and progressed over the years, or predict how they might develop in the future. "I remember us saying years ago that we'd need to release six or seven albums before we got anywhere near representing ourselves accurately," says Moore. "There's no difference now in our approach to making music. We still use whatever is available to us. Live recordings, four-track recordings, dictaphones, computers. It all goes into the big pot. We've got a bit better at playing instruments, but that's no surprise after ten years. I mean, you would, wouldn't you?

"Volcano The Bear is like a block of marble," he continues. "With each album we make we are chipping away, sculpting it. One release we may be working on an arm, another release we may be working on the torso and a foot. Maybe with *Classic Erasmus Fusion* we are working on the head. We may never finish the sculpture, but if we do, we can always get another block of marble."

Padden offers another metaphor: "We have built our own musical house, and we create within that. Sometimes we smash a few windows or peek outside. And sometimes the rain gets in." "Volcano The Bear is a ship on the ocean," suggests Moore. "And we are but tugboats," adds Padden, mock-wistfully. "Wrestling with this thing that's veering this way and that."

Moore changes his mind again, finally coming up with a comparison that satisfies him. "It is like an out of control machine, like a lawnmower driving around the garden on its own and we're chasing after it."

"Mind the rhododendrons," warns Padden. □ Classic Erasmus Fusion *is out next month on Beta-Lactam Ring. Website: www.brainwashed.com/vtb*

2005

In our 12 page review of 2005, we present the top 50 records of the year, and the winning releases in each genre as voted for by our team of writers and critics, who also offer their personal highlights. Plus, a selection of this year's high-ranking musicians deliver their verdicts on the past 12 months

REWIND

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50 Records Of The Year

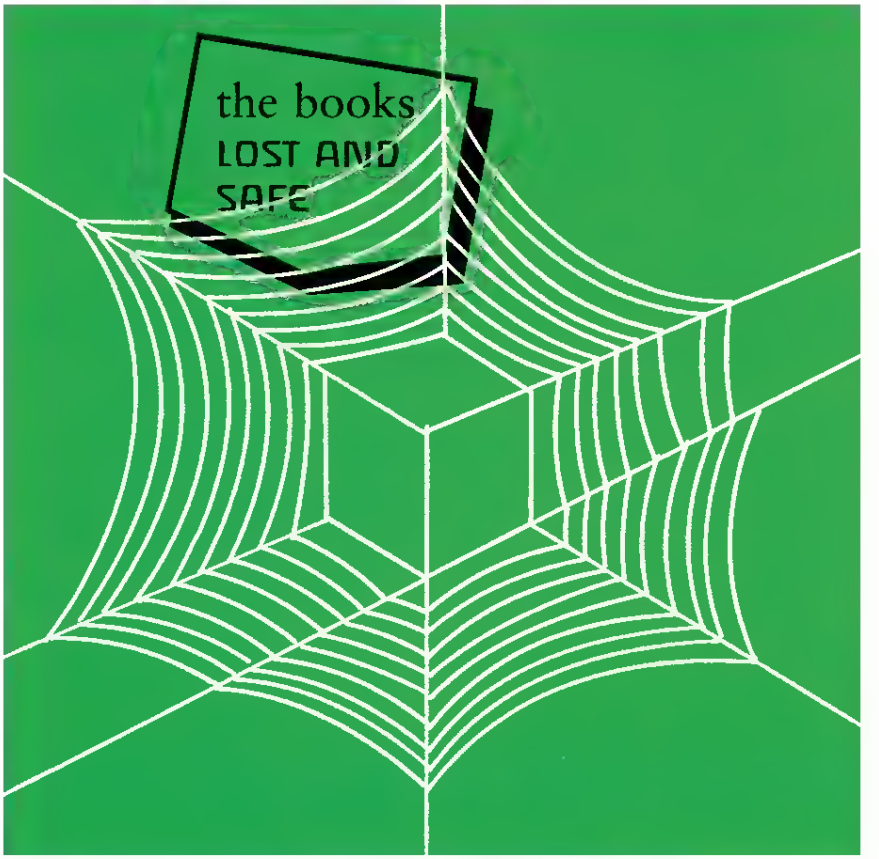
The Books Lost And Safe (Tomlab)
MIA Arular (XL)
Animal Collective Feels (FatCat)
Richard Youngs The Naive Shaman (Jagjaguwar)
The Lappetites Before The Libretto (Quecksilber)
The Focus Group Hey Let Loose Your Love (Ghost Box)
LCD Soundsystem LCD Soundsystem (DFA)
Tetuzi Akiyama Route 13 To The Gates Of Hell: Live In Tokyo (Headz)
CocoRosie Noah's Ark (Touch And Go)
Boards Of Canada The Campfire Headphase (Warp)

Antony & The Johnsons I Am A Bird Now (Rough Trade)
Ariel Pink Worn Copy (Paw Tracks)
The Chap Ham (Lo Recordings)
Black Mountain Black Mountain (Jagjaguwar)
Isoleé We Are Monster (Playhouse)
David Behrman My Dear Siegfried (XI)
The Sealed Knot Unwanted Object (Confront Collectors Series)
Kokono No 1 Congotronics (Crammed Discs)
Edan The Beauty And The Beat (Lewis Recordings)
Jackson & His Computer Band Smash (Warp)

Lightning Bolt Hypermagic Mountain (Load)
Lau Nau Kuutarha (Locust Music)
Thuja Pine Cone Temples (Strange Attractors Audio House)
Sunburned Hand Of The Man Wedlock (Eclipse)
Kanye West Late Registration (Roc-A-Fella)
John Fahey The Great Santa Barbara Oil Slick (Water)
Mouthus Slow Globes (Troubleman)
Sufjan Stevens Illinoise (Rough Trade)
Rova :: Orkestrova Electric Ascension (Atavistic)
John Wall Cphon (Utterpsalm)

Jamie Lidell Multiply (Warp)
Susan Howe & David Grubbs Thiefth (Blue Chopsticks)
Broadcast Tender Buttons (Warp)
Om Variations On A Theme (Holy Mountain)
Low The Great Destroyer (Rough Trade)
Akron/Family Akron/Family (Young God)
John Coltrane One Down, One Up: Live At The Half Note (Impulse!)
Brian Eno Another Day On Earth (Hannibal)
Josephine Foster Hazel Eyes, I Will Lead You (Locust Music)
Prurient Black Vase (Load)

Bonnie 'Prince' Billy & Matt Sweeney Superwolf (Domino)
Sightings Arrived In Gold (Load)
Masayuki Takayanagi Action Direct (Tiliqua)
Einstürzende Neubauten Grundstuck (www.neubauten.org)
Pelt Untitled (VHF)
Matthew Herbert Plat Du Jour (Accidental)
Buck 65 Secret House Against The World (Warners)
Six Organs Of Admittance School Of The Flower (Drag City)
Keiji Haino Global Ancient Atmosphere (PSF)
Eliane Radigue Elemental II (ROSA)



The Books

Lost And Safe
(Tomlab)

A deceptively tranquil proposition, with their tinkling acoustic instrumentation and harmonised vocals, New York State based duo The Books (Paul De Jong and Nick Zammuto) are as paradoxical and unresolved as the title of their 2005 album suggests, an oblique response to troubled times. For running beneath the surface of their songs is a concurrent text, made up of sampled voices of obscure attribution, which jar enigmatically and perturbingly throughout the album, such as the grainy recording of a frail, well spoken gentleman who repeatedly chants, *"I am the angel of death!"* We said: "*Lost And Safe*'s fractured and splintered collage offers a vision of an America cloven from its originating motives of statehood, unable to address itself in a public language. The Books are America's new survivalists, intellectual and urbane, waiting for the storm to blow over" (April/254)

Steve Barker
Passing the three year milestone living in China is like the dreaded second album syndrome: you either make it or you don't. As it was, plenty of positive action got crammed into the second half of the year, with the advent of Lawrence Li's globalnoiseonline.wordpress.com as portal to China's new sonic expeditionaries. Most remarkable purchase of the year was the eight disc set, from Chengdu's Huan Qian, of field recordings across Southern China, packed in hand-lettered brown paper sleeve and tied with rough string. Yan Jun's continuing Kwanyin Waterland night at the Dos Kolegas bar in Beijing was the probably bravest and most successful night of free Improv anywhere in the world. Sun Dawei's Shanshui label crossed both sonic and geographic boundaries. Fm3's blow against the over-indulged iPod generation with the Buddha Machine's ultimate lo-fi loopy chic was most fun. Plus, it was great to see Eno, Toop, Cusack and Bell finally discovering China after so many years in Japan.

Mike Barnes
With the passing of the years, as time feels like it's speeding up, the whole process is accompanied by an almost obsessive acceleration of listening. No matter how bombarded one is with new releases, more are needed: more CD burns, more friends' compilations and, if the flow abates at all, a stocking up of vintage, mid-priced reissues. So what if I can't remember the names of those two unlabelled Sunburned Hand CD-Rs, or when I got them, or even where the hell I put them – it's great to have them. Live highlights of 2005 included Van Der Graaf Generator (best 'reunion' shows I've ever seen) and Jaga Jazzist (best live group I've seen, full stop). The year was summed up nicely by two consecutive nights in November. First was the haunting, painterly improvisation of Mike Cooper/Lol Coxhill/Rhodri Davies/Roger Turner/David Toop, then next evening The White Stripes with their beautiful, boiled down 21st century rock 'n' roll.

Clive Bell
I visited Beijing twice this year, and that clamouring, sizzling wok of a soundscape is a hard act to follow. Tapdancers in the park, chattering taxi meters and a circling choir of whistle-bearing pigeons – and then there's the candyfloss pop, as sugary as two meringues and just as addictive. Fried chillies and fermenting tofu bring tears to the eyes – as did Damon & Naomi (with guitarist Michio Kurihara) visiting London in May, and Hardanger fiddler Nils Økland at the Spitz in February. In July, Hermeto Pascoal's group showed us everything we know is wrong about Brazilian music and jazz, while Otomo Yoshihide's New Jazz Ensemble played London at last. Meanwhile, The People Show celebrated 39 years of making sleazy, surrealistic theatre with *The Obituary Show* at the Bush Theatre, where their version of "Sea Cruise" had me hyperventilating with pleasure.

Philip Clark
2005 has been my year of travel. Experiencing the first night of William Parker's Vision Festival was the sort of jazz experience only New York can bestow on listeners, although stumbling across a performance of Chinese Opera in a Beijing teahouse later in the year was equally as powerful. 2005 has also been the year that the great CD rediscovery market gathered pace – Monk and Coltrane, the Coltrane Quartet at the Half Note, extra bits of Ornette and Pat Metheny and Jelly Roll Morton's seven CD blockbuster on Rounder have all given me greater stimulation that anything new issued by those same major labels, which is wonderful and troubling in equal part. The non-musical highlight of the year has been Jonathan Coe's BS Johnson biography – another progressive force in British arts destroyed by the establishment. And talking of establishment figures, dullest release of the year goes to Thomas Ades's Blairite *Piano Quintet* – when will his bubble burst?

Mia Clarke
The most exciting live shows this year definitely include Fantomas at Dour Festival, Belgium, as the sky began to darken; Liars in Berlin; and my favourite frontwoman, Satomi Matsuzaki of Deerhoof, doing her odd 'scissor cut' dance on stage in San Francisco. Discovering Andrei Tarkovsky's movies and book of Polaroids, along with cheap back issues of *The New Yorker*, kept me going while living in Prague. It's also been inspiring to see friends all over the world working on their own terms, such as the excellent Chicago based fanzine *Hit It Or Quit*, and Bristol's burgeoning underground artists and labels. Also good to know that exciting things are happening in my hometown of Brighton: the success of the city's first Ladyfest, the births of drumming troupe Leopard Leg and instrumental quartet Restlesslist. Thanks also to Mike Barnes, who sent me one of the most beautiful and devastating tracks I've ever heard: Kalinka Vulcheva's "The Bleating Lamb".

Julian Cowley
Most memorable live music of my year was a simply mesmerising performance by Indian singer Kishon Amonkar, concluding a six-hour tribute by major artists to late sitar master Ustad Vilayat Khan at London's Royal Festival Hall. Another occasion that glows in the memory was the Christian Wolff 70th birthday celebration at Kettle's Yard, a beautiful house and gallery in Cambridge. Superb performances by the chamber group Apartment House produced an unusual sense of music perfectly matched to the space of its performance. Interviewing Klinker Club host Hugh Metcalfe in the pubs and on the streets of Finsbury Park was a hilariously agreeable alternative to staying sober on a rainy afternoon. The death of Hugh Davies soon after we had discussed putting together a feature on his live electronics group Gentle Fire was deeply saddening. Anthony Braxton music on Arista vinyl has been this year's favoured retro listening.

MIA
Arular
(XL)

Maya Arulpragasam took an extraordinary and circuitous route to the pop end of Grime – born in Sri Lanka, her father was a member of a radical Tamil separatist group. Relocating to London with her family, she was inspired to take up music by hearing Public Enemy pumping through the walls of her flat, and later fell under the wing of Elastica's Justine Frischmann, who encouraged her to record her first album. Although lines such as *"Like PLO, we don't surrender"* smacked to some of 'terrorist chic', *Arular* is so raw, striking and engaging as to minimise such objections. We said: "MIA's debut is a thrilling affair. It's chockful of machine gun beats, seismic sub-bass, fragments of raga and above all that voice" (February/252)

Animal Collective
Feels
(FatCat)

With a collaboration with revived songwriter Vashti Bunyan also out this year, as well as satellite releases from Rusty Santos, Jane and Ariel Pink on their own Paw Tracks label, Animal Collective are not just a group, but the epicentre of a phenomenon. *Feels*, on which avant rock, toybox psychedelia and a touch of campfire New Weirdness all hazily merge to create a sort of desolate idyll, is their most accomplished recording to date. We said: "What an inclusive album this follow-up to last year's *Sung Tongs* is – inclusive in its busy, cluttered sound, where everything seems to be happening at once and nothing is left out, and in its emphasis on accessibility through melody and the conveyance of an almost childlike sense of wonder" (October/260)

Richard Youngs
The Naive Shaman
(Jagjaguwar)

The prolific British free rock auteur employed digital technology and homespun practical magic to create this set of oceanic, cyclical songs, singing a twisting songline through five epic explorations of psychedelic drone. We said: "Youngs may term himself a naive shaman, but these excursions across the borders that limn mind and body, dark and light, prove he has no fear of the shaman's quest" (October/260)

Christoph Cox
Fionn Meade & Rob Millis's exemplary group sound exhibition In Resonance at Seattle Center, in spite of its occlusion of the sonic, the Visual Music exhibition at the Hirshhorn, Washington, DC, classic videos by Nam June Paik, Gary Hill, and Steina & Woody Vasulka at Eyebeam's What Sound Does A Color Make?, Künstler Archiv at Berlin's Akademie Der Künste, Nina Katchadourian at Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York, the first issue of *The Relay Project*, a wonderful new Brooklyn based audio magazine curated by Lucy Raven and Rebecca Gates, *Sound-Voice-Perform*, Errant Bodies Press/Ground Fault Recordings' wonderful survey of work by Canadian sound artist Chnstof Migone, Fe-mail's ferociously lovely performance at Hampshire College, DJ Atari's wicked Balls Funk podcast at the Reasoner blog, streams and downloads from the extraordinary Resonance FM, countless precious hours spent feeding my addiction to HBO's *The Wire* and then, to ease withdrawal, fixing on *The Shield* and *24*.

Jon Dale
2005: the welcome return of Vashti Bunyan, Saint Etienne and Edith Frost. I didn't hear that much music this year as bold as Broadcast's *Tender Buttons*, Isolee's *We Are Monster* or Róisín Murphy's *Ruby Blue*, but there was plenty to get excited about. The Skaters towering over damn near everyone, Richard Youngs, Astral Social Club (and Neil Campbell's pro-disco campaign), Phil Todd and his Ashtray Navigations, and MV/EE. I was charmed by new music from Tenniscoats, Stereolab, The Concretes and the Ghost Box label. More things you should hear: *Hit The Jackpot*, Arek Gulbenkoglu's sensational solo disc, Anthony Guerra's *Empty Kingdoms*, everything on Document and Breakdance The Dawn. Komeda, Battiato, Comelade, MB, Tazartes, Morricone, Joyce and Cilio for history lessons. Will Guthrie and Erell Latimier. And Superpitcher and his gorgeous red scarf! One (more) thing: Amerie. Best experience this year (and every year): dancing to "Genius Of Love"

Sam Davies
Steve Reid and his Ensemble at Koko in Camden, North London was so good it bordered on the psychedelic. A continuous roaring blast that evolved telepathically into ever more intensely coloured passages, it was also a demonstration of how a master drummer can function as bandleader, propelling the group onto fresh ideas and themes and not merely offering a rhythmic reference point. The group hardly seemed to draw breath for over 40 minutes, and nor, it felt, could the audience. Scorsese's sprawling Dylan documentary *No Direction Home* was another highlight: a rare example of a music film given enough space and time to breathe, and to dig as deep as it liked into its subject.

Phil England
Pros: Lots of memorable live performances in London this year (many of them entirely acoustic). I Am A Kamura, Tom Chant, Die Trip Computer Die, Roger Turner & Charlotte Hug, Kay Grant/Sylvia Hallett/Caroline Kraabel, Sideband, Common Object, John Bisset & Alex Ward, Evan Parker/Steve Beresford/John Edwards/Mark Sanders, Christian Marclay's *Graffiti Composition* realised by Steve Beresford and ensemble, Dirthole, Jaap Blonk performing *Ursonate*, Lucy Weston's leaving party at the Klinker featuring Veryan Weston's Two Old Joannas, Zolan Ouobble, Sculpture, Remote Viewers, Alan Wilkinson, John Butcher/Lol Coxhill, Steve Noble/Joe Williamson/Alex Ward at the last Bonnington, Fuck Off Batman and Jacqui Clark. Quote of the year was Brian Eno in *The Guardian*: "Everybody is entertained to death. There's so much entertainment going on, there's so much to distract yourself and it all looks so much more interesting than politics"
Cons: Not enough carbon-neutral CDs in the world.

Phil Freeman
Personal highlights: my second book, *Running The Voodoo Down. The Electric Music Of Miles Davis* (Backbeat) and a contract to edit an anthology for Da Capo. Gigs of the year: Meshuggah, Fantomas, The Mars Volta. (Live jazz, even the usually reliable Vision Festival, was uninspiring.) Biggest disappointment: Jandek's NYC debut. His backing trio (Loren Connors, Matt Heyner, Chris Corsano) kicked his ass, making his lugubrious howling and rudimentary synth unnecessary at best, and mostly just annoying. Reissues and vault-scrapings (like the still-unreleased Miles *Cellar Door* box) made up 2005's best jazz, again. All the creative vitality seemed to be in Metal this year, so here's a short list of groups, mostly ignored by outsiders, that *Wire* readers should investigate post-haste: Antigama, Arch Enemy, Behemoth, The Black Dahlia Murder, Buried Inside, Craft, Hate Eternal, Ion Dissonance, Krisiun, Lost Soul, The Mass, Mastodon, Napalm Death, Opeth, Origin, The Red Chord and Sargeist.

Susanna Glaser
My first full year as Web Editor of *The Wire* welcomed me into foreign music territory. Stirling's Le Weekend urged me to seek more broken gentleness (MV & EE) but couldn't turn me onto feral free jazz (Wally Shoup Tno). London's Cut And Splice awed with the wondrous Jaap Blonk's performance of Kurt Schwitters's *Ursonate* and the sheer wall of fear generated by Robert Ashley's *The Wolfman*. In comparison Sonar dazzled but revealed cracks at its edges as audiences crammed sardine-like at Sonar By Day and rattled around in hangars By Night. But my familiar world of electronica was vindicated by Norway's Numusic, including a first encounter with Danish eccentric Goodiepal. On a more personal note, a flurry of innovative compilations aimed at or featuring babies was initially viewed at a safe distance before I was thrown unexpectedly in at the subjective end with my life about to change irrevocably in March 2006. Music will, perhaps, never sound the same again.

Louise Gray
I never thought I'd find myself up a mountain on the Isle of Skye at midnight, but *The Storr Project*, organised by the Glasgow based environmental arts group nva, got me up there, and I'm very glad that they did. Back on Earth, Forced Entertainment, unbeatable for inventiveness, sat in a medieval church in Suffolk and spun tales until dark with *And On The Thousandth Night ...*, revived specially for a church ale organised by the live art salon, home. Patti Smith's elegant fire set her own Meltdown Festival at the Royal Festival Hall ablaze, and at the same venue, Lisbon's suave fadonista Marza kicked off her heels, got down from the stage and sang – like some street kid yet to discover that the world's not hers to rule. Once again, Neubauten were genial delights on their London date. Nick Cave and Warren Ellis delivered some fine songs for a young Icelandic *Woyzeck* at the Barbican. And Ellis proved a fine conversationalist for an Invisible Jukebox conducted at my old flat, on the eve of moving, amid a slew of boxes and loose LPs – he had much to say on some Arvo Part ones. On a chance level, overhearing a distant record stall playing 801's version of "TNK" at the same time as some local oompah band started up and thereby provided an alternative bassline, was a winsome experience. And Richard Wolfson, who belonged to Towering Inferno and others besides, left too soon.

The Lappetites

Before The Libretto
(Quecksilber)

Kaffe Matthews convened this 'multispeaker playground' with Eliane Radigue, Antye Greie Fuchs and Ryoko Kuwajima as a non-hierarchical forum for shuffling text, operatic fragments and liberal blasts of 'her noise'. We said: "Laptop groups, with players controlling each other's sounds, are capable of making a new and different kind of music; as individual contributions cease to be discernible, attention shifts to the democratised music made by the group. That's precisely what happens with *Before The Libretto*." (October/260)

The Focus Group

Hey Let Loose Your Love
(Ghost Box)

The solo project of Julian House, who has designed distinctive album sleeves for Stereolab and Broadcast among others, *Hey Let Loose Your Love* reflects an obsession with the archives of the bygone, which transcends mere kitsch and nostalgia. Spliced together from old library records, radio dramas and long-deleted jazzy, incidental music, its 19 tracks are disquietingly dreamlike in their dusty evocations of a twilight world that takes in Diana Dors and Delia Derbyshire, an album that is worthy of its stark, neo-modernist cover art. We said: "In the work of The Focus Group and House's partners Belbury Poly and Eric Zann, memory is a theoretical portal to the phantasmal kingdom, not a trivial exercise in retro stylistics." (May/255)

LCD Soundsystem

LCD Soundsystem
(DFA)

James Murphy's disco infiltrators took an informed and anxious look at dance culture, coming up with a music awash with reference points (from Krautrock to 80s post-punk) that nevertheless sounded urgent, literate and razor-sharp funky. We said: "LCD Soundsystem's gift is to forge iron from irony, show that cleverness need not be enervating... for the anxious and disorientated who need to know where it's at, well, here's one place to start." (February/252)

Andy Hamilton
I've never spoken to so many legendary jazz improvisors in one year as during 2005, both for the book I've just finished on Lee Konitz, and for *The Wire* – beginning with Ornette Coleman, Sonny Rollins, Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea and Paul Bley. Keith Jarrett's manager said he didn't talk about other musicians except maybe Miles, and trumpeter Don Ferrara – never heard of him? He never liked publicity – was just permanently busy. Gigs of the year: Kenny Wheeler's 75th birthday concert at London's South Bank, with Lee Konitz and Evan Parker; Cooper-Moore at the Newcastle Improv Festival – who later gave a memorable defence of himself as entertainer not artist; the Music Lover's Field Companion with Takehisa Kosugi, Keiji Haino, Kazuo Imai, and most amazingly, the apocalyptic despair of Jandek's guitar and speech-singing. Liquid Architecture in Melbourne was notable for DJ Olive, and noisician Lucas Abela's amazing plate glass terrorism.

Jim Haynes
When a group with as terrible a name as Kiss The Anus Of The Black Cat can have one of the most interesting records of the year, it's a good sign that 2005 was a remarkable year in music. As far as I'm concerned, Keith Berry topped this fine year with his gorgeous piece of meditative expressionism released on Crouton, complete with a wonderful aroma. Andrew Chalk, Maurizio Bianchi, Ariel Pink, Manu Holterbach, and Paavoharju all produced remarkable records this year. In addition to these fine recordings, I had the opportunity to experience some amazing performances and installations from John Duncan, Keith Evans, Michael Meyers, Diane Jones, Steve Roden, Climax Golden Twins, Jesse Paul Miller, and Steven Vitiello, all of whom should be commended for their immense talents. It was also a delight to collaborate with the aforementioned Evans as well as with Matt Waldron, and always with Loren Chasse. While I've not been much of an anime fan, *Paranoia Agent* stands out as a truly warped series for television; kudos should also go to the stylised *Samurai Champloo* as well. Let's hope for another good year in culture to bring joy in this increasingly miserable world.

Richard Henderson
Having occupied several months during the previous year loading my collection into iTunes, I had planned to spend much of 2005 glorying in the consummate availability of sound (albeit in various compressed audio formats). I didn't get very far with the decadent bit, elderly vinyl discs cried out for digitising, knowing they might never be listened to again if they weren't in my virtual jukebox. And so began a preoccupation, leading to joy and ongoing in the current year: my online journal and archive ('blog' has such an uncomfortably urological ring), permanentcondition.blogspot.com. Occasionally I can still be lured out of the house to a concert, should it hold extraordinary promise, like Konono No 1's extended – and convulsively beautiful – set at San Francisco's Palace Of Fine Arts. Or the preternatural mind meld achieved onstage between Terry Riley and his son Gyan at the former's 70th birthday concert in Los Angeles.

Hua Hsu
I really enjoyed HBO's *The Wire* on DVD – perhaps the most stinking (and accurate) portrayal of life as a magazine columnist, ever. *Arrested Development* (RIP), *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Reno 911* also kept me distracted enough. When I wasn't watching television or reading books about China and/or the humanities, I was probably eating at Central Kitchen or the C*** B***, or thinking of doing so. And when I wasn't doing one of those things, I was filling my portable listening devices with Jay-Z guest verses and songs about crack. The best records I found this year: Frank Turner, Bilal Sabir, The Confidentials and Jamie Delgado *Aparicio*. The best concert ever, despite BMP's absence: traffic sound and a pair of dolphins at a four star hotel in Lima, Peru. Rest in peace, New Orleans.

Matthew Ingram
Grimey: Ruff Sqwad "Underground", "All Day Long", "Don't Truss", "Future", "We Bring It Down", "Jam Pie"; Danny Weed "Cloud Nine", "Shank"; Fire Camp "No"; JME "Serious"; Essentials "State UR Name (Original Mix)"; YGC "Countdown (Jammer Remix)"; Target *Aim High Volume 2*; Aftershock *Shockin' Mixtape Volume 1*. Folktronica: The Focus Group, Belbury Poly, The Books, The Lickets, The Kallikak Family. Animal Collectivity: Ariel Pink, Panda Bear, Rusty Santos, Jane. Bhangra Firing: Dr Zeus "The Original Edit", Northern Lights *Sparked*. Life in dance music: Jackson *Smash*; Isolée *We Are Monster*. Bizarre &B: Sa-Ra "Midnight Birds", "The Second Time Around". Reissues: INA-GRM *Archives GRM*, Bill Fay *Time Of The Last Persecution*, Matthias Schuster *Atemlos*, Kraftwerk *Minimum-Maximum*, *Berlin Super 80*. Rediscovery: Hector Zazou *La Perversita*, Thomas Leer *4 Movements*, The Associates, Monoton, Bruno Nicolai. Underground NDW. Gig: Ariel Pink at Scratch. Radio: Rinse FM. Book: Simon Reynolds *Rip It Up And Start Again*. Website: Dissensus.

Rahma Khazam
Finally catching a performance of Tom Johnson's unique *The Four Note Opera*, which has been holding audiences in thrall since 1972. Nicolas Frize's gripping street opera *Petites Vacances*, performed in a long, dank tunnel in Paris. The quirky sculptures and thought-provoking sound installations at Instants Chavirés' annual sound art show. The magical, shimmering drones of Romain Kronenberg's *Drone Dawn* at the Cartier Foundation. The vast sprawling dada exhibition at the Pompidou Centre. Catching Charlemagne Palestine's moving surprise concert in the cavernous expanses of Paris's Grand Palais in October. Sitting spellbound through the revival of Robert Lepage's *The Dragons' Trilogy*, which has scarcely aged since I first saw it in 1989. Missing Steve Roden and Paul Panhuysen's joint concert at the Serpentine Gallery in London. The passing of Hugh Davies and Luc Ferrari, both of whom will be sorely missed.

Tetuzi Akiyama

Route 13 To The Gates Of Hell: Live In Tokyo
(Headz)

This year, hardly a month went by without a new Akiyama disc, each of them revealing a different facet to an improvising guitarist whose idea of freedom in the pursuit of his idiosyncratic vision enshrines freedom of movement between genres and styles. Contrasting an acoustic set tinged with Country blues with an electric boogie outing, featuring raucous takes of tracks from his vinyl only *Don't Forget To Boogie* LP and a nine minute thrash "Fast Machines (For Alan Licht)", this is by some lengths his most thrilling, not to say surprising, release. This year, anyway. We said: "The La Monte Young/Velvets/Branca lineage is explicit, but so is Akiyama's own heritage: in keeping with Japanese performance practice, the act of tuning itself is as much part of the performance" (August/258)

CocoRosie

Noah's Ark
(Amish)

CocoRosie comprise two long-estranged sisters, Bianca and Sierra Cassady, who came together in 2004 to release their debut album, *La Maison De Mon Rêve*. A melange of torch song, hiphop and ethereal avant rock, it reflected the dank leakiness of the Parisian apartment in which it was recorded, as well as the strange chemistry between the siblings. *Noah's Ark* is an advance on its predecessor, better realised and less hermetic, featuring contributions from Antony (Johnson) and French MC Spleen. However, none of CocoRosie's warped innocence has been lost in the transition from four-track. We said: "Urban lament is interchanged with earthy shamanism throughout. *Noah's Ark* retains their beautiful otherness while coming across as more focused and confident" (October/260)

Boards Of Canada

The Campfire Headphase
(Warp)

Long in the brewing and bittersweet to the taste, the eagerly awaited third album by the reclusive Scottish twosome seasoned their artificially aged electronica with guitars, organic instruments and a potent sense of decay. We said: "Their music is slathered with textural referents, deliberate sonic aides memoires that are almost recognisable but remain just out of memory's reach" (October/260)

Alan Licht
My favourite concerts were Gang Of Four at Primavera Festival in Barcelona (Andy Gill's stone-faced stage presence blew me away), Wolf Eyes at New York University (70 per cent standup comedy, 30 per cent music, but these guys can pull it off), Jandek at Anthology Film Archives (otherworldly song cycle with incredible contributions by Loren Connors on guitar – I got to perform with Jandek & Heather Leigh Murray at Instal in Glasgow, which was a thrill), and the Finnish free folk tour at Tommy's Tavern in Brooklyn (Lau Nau was particularly impressive). The Eye And Ear Controlled series at Anthology was a much needed glimpse at avant film/music crossover, and Martin Scorsese's *No Direction Home* documentary on Bob Dylan was as satisfying a 'life and times' of the man up to 1968 as I could have wished for.

Dave Mandl
Music: Preparing to buy a laptop so I can stop lugging 100 CDs down to WFMU to do my radio show every week. Personal thrill: Conducting 25 non-musicians for an algorithm based live performance in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Brilliant new music continues to fall from the sky despite the more dismal than ever state of radio and mainstream labels, the reissue situation is a dream come true. Video highlights: *Kung Fu Hustle*, Costa-Gavras's *Z*, original *Wallace & Gromit* shorts (finally available on DVD), *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (guilty pleasure). Books: The price of new books (like CDs) suddenly seems insanely high, fortunately, it's easier than ever to find used goods for a quarter of the cover price; ditto for finding rarities that would have been impossible to locate pre-Internet. Art: The Photography of Edward Burtynsky at the Brooklyn Museum.

Brian Marley
Steve Roden's late September appearance at London's Serpentine Gallery was the show I most looked forward to in 2005. But the gallery's temporary pavilion (designed by Alvaro Siza, Eduardo Souto De Moura and Cecil Balmond) was open to the elements and proved an unsuitable venue for Roden's delicate, lightly amplified music. (Or the music was unsuitable for the pavilion, discuss.) What I mainly heard was traffic surging along West Carriage Drive. Very disappointing. But quality CDs, including Roden's own *Transmissions*, have been plentiful this year. Most played CD: *China: Album Of The Prunus Hermitage* (Ocora).

Marc Masters
On a dark January night here in Washington DC, the chill of Presidential Inauguration was dulled by the responding heat of Monotract, Flaherty/Corsano, Nautical Almanac and everyone else at Noise Against Fascism, which set the tone for another year of bad politics and great shows. Including: Animal Collective's precise blur at the Black Cat, Gang Gang Dance's tribal new wave at Ottobar, the distorted rainbow of Kites at DC9, the singing strings of Lau Nau in Philly, Easy Action's sweaty fire at Warehouse Next Door, Excepter's woozy beat at NYC's Cake Shop, warm meditations from Samara Lubelski, Paul Metzger, Fursaxa, and Sir Richard Bishop at 611 Florida Avenue (a homemade venue that's one of the few reasons not to escape DC), and multiple emissions from my two favourite noise groups, the cavernous, ear-engulfing Double Leopards and the crunching, muscle-altering Mouthus.

Keith Moliné
Ornette Coleman at the Barbican stands out as event of the year, proving once again that age needn't blunt the edge of creativity and passion. I also enjoyed Jonny Greenwood's Ether Festival at the South Bank, though I understand that this might now mean there's a contract out on me by Ed Baxter and the LMC. Another great gig was The Chap in a dingy hole in North London, which had the audience goggle-eyed in wonder, doubled-up with laughter, and dancing like motherfuckers. Biggest disappointment – not having my hysterically positive review of Magma's preposterously great *KA* passed by my Zeuhl-unfriendly editors. When will they realise – Kobaia iss de hundin!

Brian Morton
This was the year the record collection finally had to shrink, so inevitably a year of retrospection. Most played of the old stuff: Ric Colbeck's *The Sun Is Coming Up* (which stays), Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath (which went) and every note of Miles Davis from Herbie Fields and Rubberlegs Williams to *Doo-Bop* (which, er, also stays – for the moment). Looking forward, Satoko Fujii seems bound for superstardom and The Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra remains a vivid hope. Otherwise, Paul Rutherford just keeps going. *Ascension* finally made sense. And I got to vote for an accordionist as Record Of The Year.

Anne Hilde Neset
Music: Bonnie 'Prince' Billy (as always), CocoRosie, Lightning Bolt, Vashti Bunyan and especially The Chap's preposterous humour and persistent groove demonstrated on *Ham*. On screen: *I Love Huckabees* for Angelica Houston's 'existential detective', *Six Feet Under* and David Attenborough's series investigating the sex lives of creepy crawlies. Weird and fascinating. Live: LCD Soundsystem in the confined space of Rough Trade Covent Garden, The Thing featuring Thurston Moore in Oslo, Joanna Newsom in Brussels, Einsturzende Neubauten's 25th anniversary, and Patti Smith with Kevin Shields at Meltdown in London. Carter Burwell's live scoring of plays by the Cohen Brothers and Charlie Kaufman, acted out live by John Goodman, Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman and other members of the more adventurous Hollywood elite was astounding. Two projects that I worked on finally opening after years of hard work: the *Her Noise* exhibition at South London Gallery, and *Perfect Partner* with Kim Gordon, Tony Oursler and Phil Morrison going on tour. The birth of my son. Bliss.

Avant Rock A–Z

Birchville Cat Motel with Lee Ranaldo
30th December 2004 (Celebrate Psi Phenomenon)
Burning Star Core The Very Heart Of The World (Thin Wrist)
Double Leopards Out Of One, Through One And To One (Eclipse)
Earth Hex; Or Printing In The Infernal Method (Southern Lord)
Hisato Higuchi 2004 11 2005 4 (Ghost Disc)
Jandek Glasgow Sunday (Corwood)
Mouthus Slow Globes (Troubleman)
MV/EE & The Bummer Road
We Offer You Guru (Child Of Microtones)
Om Variations On A Theme (Holy Mountain)
Skullflower Orange Canyon Mind (Crucial Blast)
Sunburned Hand Of The Man Wedlock (Eclipse)
Sunn O))) Black One (Southern Lord)
Jack Rose Kensington Blues (Beautiful Happiness)
Yellow Swans/Grey Daturas Copper/Silver (JYRK)
Wooden Wand & The Vanishing Voice
Buck Dharma (Time-Lag)

Critical Beats A–Z

Isolée My Hi-Matic (Playhouse)
DJ Koze Don't Feed The Cat (Kompakt)
Motiivi:Tunetmaton 1939 (Freundinnen)
Don Atom featuring Tea Time
Mueve La Cintura (Essay Recordings)
Skream Midnight Request Line (Tempa)
Tori Alamaze Don't Cha (Universal)
Les Visiteurs Snoop's Acid Drop (white label)
Lindstrom I Feel Space (Feedelity)
Paul Kalkbrenner Tatü-Tata (Bpitch Control)
Matias Aguayo Drums & Feathers (Kompakt)
Hell Follow You (Dominik Eulberg Remix) (Gigolo)
Aswefall Ride (Der Schmeieser Lovelysplintermix) (Kill The DJ)
Rude 66 Die Starke Der Vernichtenden Schlage (Bunker)
George Issakidis Understand What I'm Saying (NovaMute)
MANDY vs Booka Shade Mandarine Girl (Get Physical)

Edwin Pouncey
As the world became considerably scarier in 2005, the vast range of exciting new music released and performed live showed that it is alive, well and flourishing as the Apocalypse draws ever nearer. This was partly reflected in the beautiful barrage of inventive noise and drone rock produced by such groups as Wolf Eyes, Dead Machines, Hair Police, Mouthus, Prurient, Bons, Earth, Sunn O))), Yellow Swans, Axolotl and others who took the form to new sonic heights of doom and derangement. The fact that many of these groups are now releasing their own records on various standard and handcrafted formats was also exciting, in that the outdated idea of signing to a corporate record company to get a record released is finally over. With enough technological and direct fanbase support, who needs record companies anymore? Punk's dream has finally been realised.

On a personal level, my mania with Black Metal increased in 2005, bringing much secret pleasure as the sonic undercurrents that writhe and clash beneath the best of the music continue to reveal fresh thrills. The best of the batch being buzzing blasts from Xasthur, Leviathan/Lurker Of Chalice, Furze, Inquisition, Benighted Learns, Deathspell Omega and Vondur.

Mosi Reeves
Best: Count Bass D, Edan's *Beauty And The Beat*, M83, Piano Overlord, from MIA to ATLI, DJ Contra rocking with MIA, Buck 65 in Miami, Sweat Records, the further adventures of Madlib, Cool Calm Pete, Miranda Jane's blog, Sasha Frere-Jones's *New Yorker* columns, Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, *Notes From A Diffferent Kitchen* blog, Damian Lazarus mixes, BitTorrent, DJ Ballz Deep, MotherFuckin' Doom, SXSW, Leslie Feist, afro punks, Busdriver, Houston rap (the singles, not the albums), Cass McCombs, Futureheads (need new album NOW!), Kate Bush.
Worst: Dance rock (The Bravery, Elkland, the list goes on and on…), trendspotting and advertorial as a form of music journalism, white hipsters claiming to be 'hood', 50 Cent's "Candy Shop", Black-Eyed Peas' "My Humps", *The Source*, sloppy-ass mixtapes, Soulseex, former friends who won't forgive me for past mistakes/disputes, homophobic hiphoppers (aka 'no homo'), *Pitchfork*'s hiphop reviews, VIP bottle service, Kanye West's "Gold Digger", Young Jeezy's *Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101*.

Simon Reynolds
Hauntology and memory work from Ghost Box (The Focus Group/Belbury Poly/Eric Zann/The Advisory Circle), Anal Pink, Boards Of Canada, Mark Fisher's *London Under London* programme for Resonance FM. Grime exhausting its narrative arc with three perfect scene-reflexive tunes for a crossover that never came: Kano's "Reload It" and "Sometimes", Lethal Bizzle's "Against All Oddz". Stratford Circus urban music festival, Ruff Sqwad and Roll Deep live at Rinse FM studio, meeting D Double E, Grime's Ian Curtis, and witnessing him enter the zone live; the voice of Bruza, anywhere, on anything, Lady Sovereign, in person and on record, Wonder's refix of SKL's "Hype Hype", Imp Batch's "Gype Riddim" with or without Crazy Titch. Animal Collective, Kudu live, Hot Chip, Art Brut, Wooden Wand And The Vanishing Voice; DJ Koze; Kanye West's "Addicted" and "Crack Music", Three Six Mafia's "Stay Fly", *Analord*, intermittently. Reissues of Comus, Orange Juice, Van Der Graaf Generator, Talking Heads, X-Ray Spex, Robert Wyatt & Friends. Non-music: *Penguin By Design*, Saint Etienne's *Finisterre*, Paglia's book on poetry; *Green Wing* and *I Am Not An Animal*.

Tom Ridge
Film/DVD: *No Direction Home*, *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou*, *Sideways*, *Bullet Boy*, *My Architect*; *Tarnation*. Books: *The Ghost Writer* by John Harwood, *Old School* by Tobias Wolfe, *Dry* by Augusten Burroughs, *The Promise Of Happiness* by Justin Cartwright, *Rip It Up And Start Again* by Simon Reynolds. Reissued Stooges, resurrected Stooges and all things Stooge-related. Jamie Lidell live. My first ever visit to the Venice Biennale.

Philip Sherburne
So-called minimal Techno enjoyed its revenge this year, moving to main rooms and festival stages after several years as a sideshow affair. And the sound continued to thicken up – whether as a cause or effect, it's hard to say – taking on anthemic proportions and buzzsaw urgency. At the other end of the spectrum, though, the stuff just got *weirder*, whether it was Areal or Motiivi Tuntematon's soupy analogue haywiring, the glitch-on-steroids disjunctures of Dominik Eulberg and The Wighnomy Brothers, or Ricardo Villalobos's rabbit-hole mind tunnels, which carried afterparty-tested beats into a dank, penumbral universe the mirror image of Autechre's pristine digital chapels. Old School reared its head via Sleep Archive's faithful machine drumming, while London dubstepper Skream bleached and scarred the same template beyond recognition.

Nick Southgate
Om wreaked low-frequency havoc in the name of high-volume nirvana at Bristol's Thekla in October. My previous thesis of the logical and aesthetic supremacy of the power trio required complete redrafting in light of their two-man minimalist thunder symphonies. Alexander Tucker's troubadour patchwork acoustic set at the Garage showed *Old Fog* was no fluke. Ploughing through Neal Stephenson's *Baroque Cycle* confirmed my long held suspicion that 17th century philosophy would provide perfect material for a multivolume picaresque adventure. The Queen Elizabeth Hall's Xenakis Festival helped me accommodate the violin as more than the source of saccharine squeaks and sawing squawks. 30 years after the event, I got to soak in a facsimile of the 1975 New York punk blossoming with Patti Smith's recreation of *Horses* at Meltdown. All in order, even the CD bonus track. I loved it, for my sins, whoever died for them.

Dub A–Z

The Bug featuring Warrior Queen
Dem A Bomb We (Ladybug)
Bush Chemists Raw Raw Dub (ROIR)
Coki Officer/Mood Dub (DMZ)
Digidub & Fairshare
Unity Sound System I Scream/No Way/Versions (David)
Prince Far I Silver & Gold (Blood And Fire)
Kode9 & Space Ape Kingstown/Kingstown Dub (Hyperdub)
Damian Marley "Welcome To Jamrock" (Tuff Gong International)
Ranking Joe World In Trouble (M Records)
Ricky Ranking Can't Trick I (Banana Klan)
Ossie All Stars Leggo Dub (Hot Pot)
Phillip Smart Productions
Five Borough Fire: Digital Dancehall NYC Style (Street Platinum & Gold)
Tempa All Stars Tempa All Stars Vol 2 (Tempa)
Travellers Black Black Minds (Pressure Sounds)
Various Jack Ruby Hi-Fi (Auralux)
Various Studio One Roots 2 (Soul Jazz)

Electronica A–Z

Alva Noto Transpray (Raster-Noton)
Alva Noto & Ryuichi Sakamoto
Insen (Raster-Noton)
Biosphere Dropsonds (Touch)
Susanne Brokesch Emerald Stars (Chicks On Speed)
Colleen The Golden Morning Breaks (Leaf)
C-Schulz 5.Flicker Tunes (Sonig)
Tod Dockstader Aerial (Sub Rosa)
Markus Guentner 1981 (Kompakt)
Hulk Silver Thread Of Ghosts (Osaka)
Inch-Time Any Colour You Like (Static Caravan)
Kyo Ichinose Lontano (Cubic Music)
Jan Jelinek Kosmische Pitch (~Scape)
Minamo Shining (12K)
Mountains Mountains (Apestaartjs)
Venetian Snares
Rossz Csillag Allat Született (Planet Mu)

David Stubbs
Although electronica continued to yield some fine and innovative releases (Susanne Brokesch's *Emerald Stars*, Matthew Herbert's *Plat Du Jour*), it does feel locked into familiar circuitry and looking for its next big quantum leap. Meanwhile, the loose global affiliation of what's variously known as free folk/psych/drone/new weirdness, despite the 'sitting crosslegged in the woods' vibe it ostensibly exudes, is gathering the momentum of a hurricane. Releases from the likes of Pelt, Es, Sunburned Hand Of The Man, Town And Country, My Cat Is An Alien don't just represent the next step backwards/forwards from the dreamy comfort zone of 90s post-rock to a more urgent, primal state of 'pre-rock'. Whereas anti-Bush sentiment has led to a slew of overtly political (and sadly, generally dispensable) ranty tracts, the insistent, static roar of these groups provides a sort of respite from The World As It Is Today, whose arteries, both cultural and political, seem to have hardened terminally.
Low points: The aesthetically and politically grotesque debacle that was Live8 and the canonisation of John Peel by the sort of people who cared not a jot that his show and the music he espoused was being pushed further into the margins and the small hours by the end of his life.

Dave Tompkins
19 February: Handed Paul C's sister Pat an OG pressing of "Give The Drummer Some". 20 May: on phone with DJ Quik about crying into Talk Box tube when mourning Roger Troutman. 21 May, 11.30: listened to Beatmaster Clay D's incredible "Titty Beats" when walking up to the Brooklyn library to find book about a Scottish paratrooper who talked to Churchill on the Vocoder. 6.45: Lightning storm of blind metal, phoned a friend and played the last 15 seconds of Human League's "Path Of Least Resistance", which is 55 seconds shorter than "Titty Beats". 11.00 pm: roommate played "Good Lovin' Is Good Livin'" by Creative Source. 11.02: dad called to tell me that my oldest brother had suddenly died. 11.30: Instrumental of Nonce's "Who Falls Apart". Sunday: Can's "Outside My Door" until my brain went hoarse. 25 May, funeral: I'm handed a tape of my brother accidentally hanging up on Dolemite at a Georgia radio station just before Dolemite said, "You never know how long you got". June: saved by a film called *Taste For Tea*. Extra-PRO: watching mom read about making my grandma's funeral mixtape at Ofher Music.

Derek Walmsley
There was a strange sense of ennui permeating electronic and dance music this year – the modernist impulse to restructure, to reimagine is too often missing, summed up by AFX's retreat into (admittedly luxurious) sound fetishism on *Analord*. The exception: Grime's made up on the spot song structures and lyrical vérité. Scientifical Madness: file sharing negating proper release of many Grime tunes (Ears' "Fine Fine", Essentials' "Headquarters"), even though they can be downloaded as ringtones; at least we can immerse ourselves in the palpable sense of activity/community now existing around Internet/pirate radio (WFMU, Resonance, Rinse FM's Bossman and Logan Sama). Elsewhere, flight from modernity took on almost spiritual overtones with incredible albums from Lau Nau, Thuja, Pelt and Animal Collective. Long live touchy-feelyness! Gigs: Slint transcendent and Olivia Tremor Control jamming with Ted Curson at ATP. Film: a gathering snowball of guerrilla documentary making, memorably *Czech Dream*. RIP, soul boy Dave Godin.

Dan Warburton
Hard to sum up a year that hasn't even finished at time of writing (with much still to come, including a tour with Aki Onda and Jac Berrocal) – all one can do is namecheck things that have made 2005 worthwhile. Labels: Not Two, L'innomable, Why Not?, Textile, Creative Sources, Mode, Crouton, Absurd, CIP. Websites: www.bagatellen.com, www.panstransatlantic.com (bien sûr). Venues: Jazz à Luz, Atelier Tampon, Le Petit Faucheux, Point Ephemère, Fylkingen, Annan Musik, Cave 12. Musicians: Ralf Wehowsky, Eliane Radigue, Charles Curtis, Nikos Veliotis, David Grubbs, Daniel and Jacqueline Caux, Borbetomagus (ears still ringing). Special thanks: Bob Gilmore, François Fuchs, Mane, Max.

Barry Witherden
Listening was limited, but music more of a sanity-saver than usual in a dreadful year of illnesses and bereavements. I confess much enjoyable listening involved groups outside *The Wire*'s purview, like Queens Of The Stone Age and Editors: undemanding, perhaps, but energising. On the jazz front it's been gratifying to see many musicians demonstrating that the old warhorse still responds to a flogging: prime exhibits included Colin Steele's *Through The Waves*. The resurrection of some great British albums from the 60s-70s flowering, not least Alan Skidmore's *Once Upon A Time* and Mike Gibbs's *Just A Head*, was welcome too. My 'classical' choices reflect the continued vitality of some long-time favourites. Live highlights were John Tchicai at the Red Rose, thanks to the efforts of John Coxon and Ashley Wales, and the slightly surreal experience of a contemporary music festival in Venice's reconstructed, timelocked La Fenice opera house.

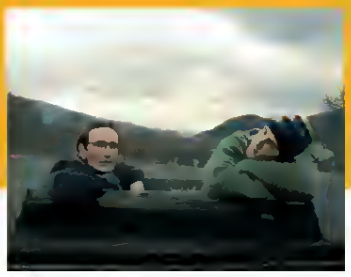
Rob Young
Providing soundtrack solace amid a vortex of deadlines, moving house and becoming a parent were LCD Soundsystem, Pierre Henry's *Voyage Initiatique*, Vashti Bunyan, The Chap, Songs Of Green Pheasant, Deerhoof, Bill Fay, Why?, Richard Youngs, Boards Of Canada, Jamie Lidell, irr.app (ext.), Antony & The Johnsons, Comus, Scritti Politti, Hamilton Yarns, English Heretic.
I read Simon Reynolds's *Rip It Up*, and fiction by David Mitchell, William Morris and Ronan Bennett, plus Lawrence Bergreen's incredible *Over The Edge Of The World*. Visual marvels: films by Daria Martin, Paolo Sorrentino's *Consequences Of Love*, Open Systems at Tate, Carsten Nicolai at Frankfurt Schirn Kunsthalle, Anselm Kiefer at White Cube, Samuel Palmer at British Museum, Caravaggio at National Gallery, Salvator Rosa at Wallace Collection, Her Noise at SLG, Jeremy Deller & Alan Kane's Folk Archive and Christian Marclay at Barbican, duck racing at Godney and of course *The Wire*'s new office. Mourned the loss of *Six Feet Under* and welcomed *Green Wing* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Top sound of the year: my son Axel's neo-Reductionist squeaks and chirps.

Global A–Z

Abdullah Chhadeh & Nara Seven Gates (ABYC)
Konono No 1 Congotronics (Crammed Discs)
Oki Tonkori (Chikar Studio)
Lobi Traoré The Lobi Traoré Group (Honest Jon's)
Various Afro Baby: The Evolution Of The Afro-Sound In Nigeria 1970–79 (Sound Way)
Various Albania: Labë Country Complaints And Love Songs (Ocora)
Various Congotronics 2: Buzz 'N' Rumble From The Urb 'N' Jungle (Crammed Discs)
Various Folk And Pop Sounds Of Sumatra Vol 2 (Sublime Frequencies)
Various Molam: Thai Country Groove From Isan (Sublime Frequencies)
Various Out Of Cuba: Latin American Music Takes Africa By Storm (Topic)
Various The Naked Prey OST (Latitude)
Various The Rough Guide To The Music Of Central Asia Uzbekistan To Kazakhstan: Sounds Of The Silkroad (World Music Network)
Various Tibetan Buddhist Rites From The Monasteries Of Bhutan Vol 1 (Sub Rosa)
Various Sleeping In The Market: Ethiopian Music & Sounds From Amhara (Latitude)
Various Thai Beat A Go-Go Vol 3 (Subliminal Sounds)

HipHop A–Z

Aasim Hip-Hop 101 (AV8)
Edan Beauty And The Beat (Lewis Recordings)
Ghostface Kilos (Def Jam)
Ellay Khule Californula (Decon/Project Blowed)
Legendary KO George Bush Doesn't Care About Black People (N/A)
Mac Dre & Mac Mall Dreidio (Thizz)
Mistah FAB Super Sic Wit It (Thizz)
Quasimoto The Further Adventures Of Lord Quas (Stones Throw)
Sadat X Experience And Education (Female Fun)
Juelz Santana There It Go (Def Jam)
Beanie Sigel The B.Coming (Roc-A-Fella)
13 & God EP (Alien Transistor)
Three 6 Mafia Stay Fly (Columbia)
TTC Batards Sensibles (Big Dada)
Tuff Crew & Krown Rulers Phanjam (Traffic)



The Books
Our first USA tour went much better than we thought it would. We found a lot of really fine stuff in the great thrift stores of the nation, including an array of inspirational audiocassettes and videotapes like *Adventure Wisconsin*, *After Cataract Surgery*, *The Continuous Chain Method*, *The Thinking Man's Hair*, *The Opportunity Of The 90s*, *Kurtain Kraft*, *Passenger Fun*, *You Can't Improve On God*, *Beyond Lighting*, *Europe Through The Back Door*, *The Pressures Of Flying*, *I'm No Actor*, *1966*, *Air Senegal*, *Big Fat Wires*, *Law And Grace*, *Where Are We Going?*, *No Hill For A Climber*, *Dead Doctors Don't Lie*, *You Don't Know What You Don't Know*, *Secret Of The Prison*, *Word Music*, *Thoughts Are Things*, *Don't Let The Gnats Get You Down*, and a Tasmanian guide to home enemas. We can't wait to get back on the road again.

Tetuzi Akiyama
My personal highlight was that I saw a performance of Yoshio Tachikawa. He plays lute and other ancient stringed instruments. He did reproduction performances of the orphanion and the Renaissance guitar for the first time in Japan in 82 and 86. He recorded a theorbo suite by Robert De Visee and John Dowland pieces on the orphanion, which came with transparence and tranquillity.

At the night concert, he played JS Bach's cello suites, arranged for lute by Tachikawa himself. Because of a certain disease, now his fingers didn't have enough power to hold down any frets, so almost all the notes came with buzz, the chords into weird dissonance and the tempo was out of order. Nonetheless he kept on playing and finished it with lots of energy and passion. That was like listening to Peg Leg Howell in his last days, unyielding and immortal. The real artists never die, but merely fade away. Nothing is more precious than being active till the end of life.

Animal Collective (Noah Lennox)
Anel Pink and crew and I went out for three weeks in February. Seemed like it was back to the old days again asking people if we could sleep on their floors. Paris was the dream show, with girls taller than I am dancing and staring at us like we weren't from around there and of course we weren't. Bologna was the rawest – so dark, like Hell. All my stuff was gone the next morning – I wanted to keep the tour going so as not to screw the other guys and started writing new songs on a guitar as we went to Nice. But then all the stuff turned up in Jon's bag three days later and all was well except Signer's guitar really was stolen. Anyways there never was a dull moment there. Many thanks to Robrob and Gary War for playing with me all those nights.

March was all with Scott Colburn [producer of the *Feels* album]. He and J fully took us in and on for a month. I remember he and Joshmin and I went and got a burrito after he picked us up from the airport, and I was like, This is going to be real fine. I'll never forget those days with Scott Colburn.

I did a bunch of recording at my new home, too, over most of the summer. It went really fast and was easy. I was with my wife in a peaceful land and everything seemed like it was going to smooth out forever. Then Nadji came, and things never would be the same. I was so ready, I guess, that the whole thing was by the book even though I couldn't speak with anyone in the hospital – doctors, nurses, patients in the waiting room – no one. It didn't kick in full until a month or so later.

Buck 65
All Tomorrow's Parties with Vincent Gallo – Ted Curson – Gang Gang Dance – Contortions – Suicide – John Foxx. Glastonbury. talkin' Woody Guthrie with Billy Bragg. I walked back to Bath. Learned my friend is getting drumming lessons from Charles Hayward. Antony & The Johnsons. Electrelane. *Good For What Ails You: Music Of The Medicine Shows 1926–1937*. I came to the conclusion that I like a lot of punk records, but I don't like to listen to people talk about punk. JT LeRoy and Asia Argento. Voltaire. *Factotum*. *No Direction Home*. *Do They Know It's Hallowe'en?* Bit by snakes twice. Asked Greil Marcus a question. liked his answer. Decided not to give him a copy of my record. It was the best year of my life and is in a tie with 99 for worst year of my life.

PHOTOS: SHINYA AIZAWA (AKIYAMA); JOHN HOOPER (CURRAN)

Jazz & Improv A–Z

Chris Abrahams Thrown (Room 40)
Derek Bailey Carpal Tunnel (Tzadik)
Clive Bell & David Ross Mystery Lights/ Nightflowers (Metier Jazz)
Bill Carrothers Civil War Diaries (Illusion)
Cold Bleak Heat It's Magnificent, But It Isn't War (Family Vineyard)
Cooper-Moore & Assif Tsahar Tells Untold (Hopscotch)
Crowther/Franklin/Marsh Amherst Dislodged (Slam)
Paul Flaherty & Chris Corsano Steel Sleet (Tyyfus)
Mochizuki Harutaka Solo Document 2004 (Bishop)
Kerbaj/Sehnaoui/Sehnaoui/Zach Rouba3i5 (Al Maslakh)
Mat Maneri Pentagon (Thirsty Ear)
MEV & AMM Apogee (Matchless)
Owl Sounds Owl Sounds with Arrington DeDionyeo (Colour Sounds Recordings)
ROVA :: Orkestrova Electric Ascension (Ataviatic)

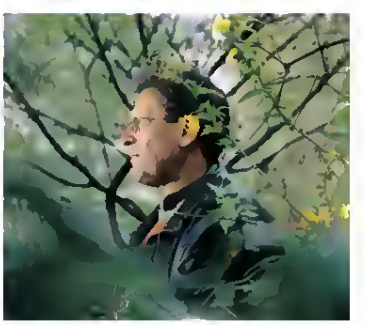
Modern Composition A–Z

David Behrman My Dear Siegfried (XI)
Harrison Birtwistle The Triumph Of Time/Gawain's Journey (NMC)
Candlesnuffer Apsomeophone (Lexicon Devil)
Henry Cowell A Continuum Portrait (Naxos)
Gérard Grisey Le Noir De L'Étoile (Accord)
Alvin Curran Maritime Rites (New World)
Morton Feldman Violin And Orchestra (Col Legno)
Morton Feldman/Christopher Fox Clarinet Quintets (Metier)
Tristan Murail Complete Piano Music (Metier)
Terry Riley & Michael McClure I Like Your Eyes Liberty (Sn Moonshine)
David Rosenboom/JB Floyd/Tricky Sankaran Suitable For Framing (Mutable)
Giacinto Scelsi Suotono Rotondo (Wergo)
Salvatore Sciarrino Fiato (Stradivarius)
James Tenney Pika-Don (Hat Hut)
Iannis Xenakis Orchestral Works Vol 4 (Timpani)

CocoRosie (Bianca Casady)
This year was wild. I fell back in love with New York. Damian Marley stole my heart on the radio driving around Brooklyn. Played shows with Antony, he sang a Whitney Houston song at Carnegie Hall – that was a special moment. Discovered Arthur Russell this year (I know it's late). Met and played with a dear friend of Antony's, William Basinski. Love his music, especially a piece called "Nine Eleven". Reggae is taking over the world. Love some songs on the new Missy Elliot. Got my grind on at the club. Been making bedroom music that's very grimy – drunken beatbox, etc ..

What else ..? This year is a blur. Matteah Baim made a series of drawings called *The Hand That Knew Too Much*, Diane Cluck made another record, met a beautiful singer form New York named Nomi. Back to Missy Elliot. she made some ill gold sneakers my whole crew got on they feet. "Woop That Trick" *(Hustle And Flow*, it was OK).

A boy broke my heart this year. So I wrote a few songs. Jene's Cook Up in New York has been off the hook, held down by Dante, a video artist and fried chicken chef. Kill whitie drama has been stupid. Fell in love with a Jamaican singer from the 70s named Teresa Tate. Started a label called Voodoo EROS, dropped two records. Kanye West's song "Diamonds Are Forever" about Sierra Leone gives me the chills. What else ..? Peace.



Alvin Curran (MEV)
2005 was an exceptional year for me, like other snails I felt my music was at last emerging from its happy hermitage. The publications of four key works, *Canti Illuminati*, *Maritime Rites* and *Toto Angelica*, spanning a lifetime in the electric department, and *Inner Cities*, a five and a half hour piano work played by Daan Vandewalle, felt like long-overdue Darwinian feathers in my cap. Performances with Zeitkratzer in Krems, Zorn directed Cobra in Bologna, MEV in New Jersey, Brakhage festival in Rome with Domenico Sciajno, with Kosugi and Phil Corner for Merce Cunningham company, with Zu and 40 other friends in Roma. The town band of Donaueschingen, and 120 students from the Caglian Conservatori and David Toop's beautifully produced Arnolfini show Playing John Cage, were all full of wonder. When I was called to fill in for Pan Sonic at the Amsterdam Night Of The Unexpected at the Paradiso, I thought, hey, maybe I can get into the big time now!

Best music: The Arditti's Scelsi concert in Rome; Otomo Yoshihide quartet in Donaueschingen and Beat Furrer's FAMA, Keith Rowe/Mike Cooper playing Cardew's *Treatise*, Supersilent, Joel Ryan and Evan Parker live in Amsterdam. Books: Orhan Pamuk *Snow*, biography of Guillaume Apollinaire, Sholem Aleichem *The Great Fair*.. Films: Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle*. Pop music: CocoRosie and Attwenger. Susan, my dear wife, created a monumental Website for me. www.alvincurran.com

On 2005: We witness the tragic worldwide confusion created largely by ex- (UK) and would-be (USA) empires and the terrifying polarisation of the haves and have-nots, along with the increasing desacralisation of human life. China and India begin to rock, and rock the boat. The worldwide trend in wearing running shoes is in my opinion a global preparation for an apocalyptic escape to where, nobody knows – the planet is riddled with perilous faults. Our unbearable life in airports is absolute proof we have nowhere to go! Music continues to fill the gaps as it replaces chewing gum, cellphones and sex. As digital and predigital life become more integrated we seem, musically speaking, to be entering a period of a 'new common practice' where electronic and acoustic, composed and improvised, bourgeois and lumpen are obsolete. Musicians will at last assume the prodigious but quite natural task of forging a new vocabulary from every sound ever heard or imagined – Cage will never stop laughing.

Outer Limits A–Z

Avarus Ruskeatimantti (Tumult)
Keith Berry The Ear That Was Sold To A Fish (Crouton)
Maurizio Bianchi & Land Use Psychoneurose (Manifold)
Boris with Merzbow Sun Baked Snow Cave (Hydra Head)
Andrew Chalk The River That Runs Into The Sand (Faraway Press)
Double Leopards & Wolf Eyes Breeding Turbines (American Tapes)
Sophie Durand & Manu Holterbach Verres Enharmoniques: Un (Cloudmirror)
Henry Flynt Punfied By The Fire (Locust Music)
Grouper Way Their Crept (Free Porcupine Society)
Keiji Haino Uchu Ni Karami Tsuiteiru Waga Itami (PSF)
Inca Ore A Knit Of My Own Fibers/ When You Are Sleeping I Tell You Secrets (JYRK)
Paavoharju Yha Hämärää (Fonal)
James Plotkin Kurtlanmak (Utech)
Prurient Black Vase (Load)
Alexander Tucker Old Fog (AT)

Compilations A–Z

American Primitive Vol II: Pre-war Revenants 1897-1939 (Revenant)
An Anthology Of Noise & Electronic Music Third A-Chronology 1952-2004 (Sub Rosa)
Archives GRM (INA/GRM)
Berlin Super 80 (Monitorpop)
By The Fruits You Shall Know The Roots (Eclipse/Time-Lag)
Can You Jack? Chicago Acid And Experimental House 1985-95 (Soul Jazz)
Doctor Who At The BBC Radiophonic Workshop Vol 1: The Early Years 1963-69 (Mute)
freq_out (Ash International)
Ghana Soundz Vol 2 (Soundway)
Good For What Ails You: Music Of The Medicine Shows 1926-37 (Old Hat)
Die Grosse Untergangsshow: Festival Genialer Dilletanten (Vinyl-On-Demand)
Invisible Pyramid: Elegy Box (Last Visible Dog)
New Thing! Deep Jazz From The USA 1970-85 (Soul Jazz)
Run The Road Vol 1 (679 Recordinge)
Spire: Live In Geneva Cathedral, Saint Pierre (Touch)
10 Yrs Series (Carbon)
The Sexual Life Of The Savages: Underground Post-Punk From Sao Paulo, Brazil (Soul Jazz)
Tokyo Flashback 5 (PSF)
Total 6 (Kompakt)
Qbico U-Nite New York I/Bruxelles II (Qbico)

Edan
2005 came and went. Hopefully I came out a bit wiser. *Beauty And The Beat* hit stores. I read lots of reviews... mostly positive. I flew out to LA. Did some stuff with Cut Chemist. I played xylophone and marimbas with some musician friends in a vacant house atop a mountain overlooking San Jose, California, of all places. Didn't tour enough. Two US tours fell through and left me at home feeling idle. I did a few select shows in the States and in the UK. There was a stint through Europe where Insight, Dagha and I slept on trains like vagabonds. We had a good show in Paris, where Guru from Gang Starr came through unexpectedly. There was one festival we did in Barcelona with MIA, Cut Chemist and De La Soul. Kanye West popped up unannounced during De La's set. At one point he had to stop due to mic feedback that lasted for about 20 seconds. Maybe it was jealousy on my part, but it felt kinda good watching Kanye on stage in that instant, looking confused with that expensive suit on...

Josephine Foster
Many live shows I witnessed this year that I won't forget, and performances by these folks come to mind as some favourites: Superstupid, Loren Connors, Charlie Nothing, Yoko Ono, Ed Askew, Feathers, United Bible Studies, Cherry Blossoms, The Melvins, Taurpis Tula, Tetuzi Akiyama, Mi & L'au, Maher Shalal Hash Baz, Kitchen Cynic, Whysp, Wizz Jones, Travelling Bell, Thee Stranded Horse, Kiila.

Some of my favourite new (to me) recorded sounds I heard this year were by Ed Askew, Tarpet, Clive Palmer, These Trails, Rodriguez, Red Crayola, Florence Foster Jenkins, Wooden Spoon, Feathers, Diane Cluck, James Blackshaw, Caveira, COB.

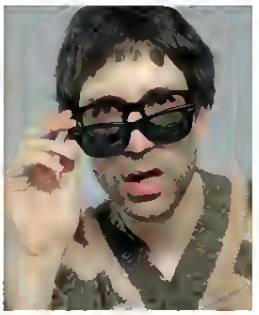
Konono No 1
The European tour was definitely an unforgettable experience for Konono. We had played some concerts a couple of years ago, but this time it's been unbelievable to see the crowds react so wildly to our music, we could never have guessed that it would happen that way around Europe and the USA. We were also very excited by some of the things we saw: the decorations and setting of the Couleur Cafe festival in Brussels, the magnificent landscapes during our journeys, especially the big mountains between Italy and Germany, and also our trips around Brussels in [Crammed press officer] Thierry's tiny Mini Cooper... Our favourite book was the press book with all the articles about Konono No 1... Our favourite film is a film we bought on DVD in Europe. *If I Were Rich*

The Lappetites (Kaffe Matthews)
Cut strata, bent towards time, fleshy. Four girls, four generations, four cultures. We play through it. It's already December.

Reissues A–Z

AFX Hangable Autobulb (Warp)
Borbetomagus Barbed Wire Maggots (Agaric)
Shirley Collins & Davy Graham Folk Roots, New Routes (Fledg'ling)
Comus Complete Recordings (Sanctuary)
Contemporary Jazz Quintet Actions 1966-67 (Atavistic Unheard Music Series)
Bill Fay Time Of The Last Persecution (Eclectic)
GI Gurdjieff Harmonic Development: The Complete Harmonium Recordings 1946-49 (Basta)
Toshi Ichiyanagi Opera From The Works Of Tadanori Yokoo (Bridge)
Kemialliset Ystävät Kellari Junivereumi (Fonal)
Basil Kirchin Abstractions Of The Industrial North (Trunk)
Gottfried Michael Koenig Acousmatrix 1/2 (Bvhaast)
Ennio Morricone Crime And Dissonance (Ipecac)
Last Exit Köln (Atavistic)
Moondog Moondog (Honest Jon's)
Naked City Complete Studio Recordings (Tzadik)
Steve Reich & Musicians Live 1977 (The Kitchen)
Sonny Sharrock Black Woman (Water)
Judee Sill Dreams Come True Hi I Love You Right Heartily Here (Water)
Soft Machine Out-Bloody-Rageous: An Anthology 1967-73 (Sony)
Sonic Youth Goo Deluxe Edition (Geffen)
Spontaneous Music Ensemble A New Distance (Emanem)
Mark Stewart Kiss The Future (Soul Jazz)
The Stooges Heavy Liquid (Easy Action)
Super_Collider Raw Digits (Rise Robots Rise)
Masayuki Takayanagi Angry Waves Dislocation (Jinya)

Jamie Lidell
I'm sat here humming with a cup of ginger tea. My voice hurts a little, to be honest. Thing is, I spent most of this year belting it out! Got to share the stage with James Brown. Crooned to an attentive Tony Benn sat only feet away. even managed to get on TV with Mr Burt Bacharach. All ranking high on the IYG (Impress Your Grandma) front. I'd say 2005 has been a great year in over/under/plunderground. I've witnessed Gonzales smoke a pure jazz woodbine before holding captive an audience of avid Juliette Greco fans with masterful grace and charm. I've seen Mocky go from strength to strength and blam Sonar with another one of his unforgettable warm displays. As always seems to happen, I got my ass set on fire by Cobra Killer and Liars. Got to hang with FM Einheit and experience the joys of destroying books. I can still taste the tatters.



Oren Marshall
Wake. Travel. Work. Eat. Sleep.

Richard Youngs
My greatest experience of 2005 was my Canadian holiday. The locally sourced artesan ethos of Montréal's Constellation Records is very inspiring and I felt honoured when asked to play a show with A Silver Mt Zion, whose LP *Horses In The Sky* I love. Fellow Canadians Troy and Tyler Elyea also continue to release tremendous records on hp cycle, their vinyl-only label. After several years of silence, Tirath Singh Nirmala, formerly John Clyde-Evans, is making music again, which is exciting. Another 'comeback' I am enjoying is Van Der Graaf Generator's. Also in 2005 I saw my first Jandek performance, the Sunday Instal 05 one. My greatest musical pleasure, however, remains recording and playing with friends, such as The Hototogisu while in Portugal. The book I liked most in 2005, though published in 2004, was Archie MacPherson's *Jock Stein. The Definitive Biography*.

The Electorate
This year's charts were compiled from the votes of the following contributors (with individual records of the year shown in brackets):

Steve Barker (Huan Qing *Yi Kuai Tong Pi*), Mike Barnes (*SFT Lana Lars Lata*), Clive Bell (Sufjan Stevens *Illinoise*), Marcus Boon (Josephine Foster *Hazel Eyes*, *I Will Lead You*), Philip Clark (Jelly Roll Morton *The Complete Library Of Congress Recordings*), Mia Clarke (Oneida *The Wedding*), Julian Cowley (Alvin Curran *Maritime Rites*), Christoph Cox (März *Wir Sind Hier*), Alan Cummings (Masayuki Takayanagi *Action Direct*), Jon Dale (Broadcast *Tender Buttons*), Sam Davies (Konono No 1 *Congotronics*), Phil England (Rhythm & Sound *See Mi Ya*), Phil Freeman (John Coltrane *One Down, One Up: Live At The Half Note*), Susanna Glaser (The Books *Lost And Safe*), Louise Gray (Tracy + The Plastics *Culture For Pigeon*), Andy Hamilton (Bill Carrothers *Civil War Diaries*), Jim Haynes (Keith Berry *The Ear That Was Sold To A Fish*), Richard Henderson (Kraftwerk *Minimum-Maximum – Live*), Tony Herrington (Various *Invisible Pyramid: Elegy Box*), Matthew Ingram (Jackson & His Computer Band *Smash*), David Keenan (Mouthus *Slow Globes*), Rahma Khazam (Various *freq_out*), Biba Kopf (Einstürzende Neubauten *Grundstück*), Alan Licht (Mindflayer *Expedition To The Hamer Peaks*), Dave Mandl (Noel Akchoté *Sonny II*), Brian Marley (Keith Rowe/Sachiko M/Toshimaru Nakamura/Otomo Yoshihide *ErstLive005*), Marc Masters (Mouthus *Slow Globes*), Keith Moliné (Magma *KA*), Will Montgomery (John Wall *Cphon*), Brian Morton (KTU *8 Armed Monkey*), John Mulvey (Sufjan Stevens *Illinoise*), Anne Hilde Neset (Bonnie 'Prince' Billy & Matt Sweeney *Superwolf*), Edwin Pouncey (Earth *Hex, Or Printing In The Infernal Method*), Mosi Reeves (M83 *Before The Dawn Heals Us*), Simon Reynolds (Ariel Pink *Worn Copy*), Tom Ridge (Akron/Family *Akron/Family*), Peter Shapiro (Konono No 1 *Congotronics*), Chris Sharp (Pelt *Untitled*), Philip Sherburne (Isolée *We Are Monster*), Nick Southgate (Julian Cope *Citizen Cain'd*), David Stubbs (Susanne Brokesch *Emerald Stars*), Dave Tompkins (Jay Dee *Donuts*), Derek Walmsley (Various *Run The Road Volume 1*), Dan Warburton (Rova : Orchestrova *Electric Ascension*), Barry Witherden (Last Exit *Koln*), Rob Young (Dangerdoom *The Mouse And The Mask*)

PHOTOS: DIRK LINDNER (LIDELL), PETER SAVILLE (MARSHALL), JOHN SPINKS (YOUNGS)

Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Lumberton Trading Company 15

Ian Helliwell
Workshop Of The World (Superbo!)
William Basinski
Variations: A Movement In Chrome Primitive (Die Stadt/Durtro)
Ustad Ali Akbar Khan
Raga Multani, Raga Hindol Hem (HMV)
Stuart A Staples
Lucky Dog Recordings 03-04 (Beggars Banquet)
Ustad Essa Kassimi
Le Leut Afghan (Anon)
The Homosexuels
Record (Black Noise)
King Tubby
Dub Gone Crazy (Blood & Fire)
David Tudor
Microphone (Cramps)
Hamilton Yarns
If The Wind Is Still (CD-R)
Six Organs Of Admittance
School Of The Flower (Drag City)
Domenico Guaccero Rot
Domenico Guaccero Rot (Die Schachtel)
Formication
Crossing The Sea By Radio (Harmful)
DJ Ordeal & The Vitamin B12
Vitamin Ordeal (Self-released)
Coil
Musick To Play In The Dark Vol 2 (Chalice)
Mi & L'au
Mi & Lau (Young God)

Compiled by Richard Johnson & Hasani Malik, Lumberton Trading Company, Brighton, UK/Krakow, Poland, www.lumbertontrading.com

Easy Street 15

Supersilent
7 (Rune Grammofon)
Gat Hustla
Rollin' In The Ruins (31G)
Sunn O)))
Black One (Southern Lord)
Murcof
Remembranza (Leaf)
Pissed Jeans
Shallow (Parts Unknown)
The Lappetites
Before The Libretto (Quecksilber)
No-Neck Blues Band
Ovaris (5RC/Sound@One)
Iannis Xenakis
Music For Strings (Mode)
Tapa
Rideau (Häpna)
Marc Ribot
Spiritual Unity (Pi)
Wighnomy Bros/Robag Wruhme
Remikks Potpourri (Mute Germany)
Lurker Of Chalice
Lurker Of Chalice (Southern Lord)
Jan Jelinek
Kosmischer Pitch (~Scape)
GoGoGo Airhaert
Rats! Sing! Sing! (Gold Standard Labs)
Cyna
Evolution Fight (City Centre Offices)

Compiled by Jefferson W Petrey, R Gary Smith & Tanya M Palmer, Easy Street Records, Seattle, US, www.easystreetonline.com

Gelbe Musik 15

David Tudor
Live Electronic Music (EMF)
Max Neuhaus
"Fontana Mix Feed" (Alga Marghen)
Emmett Williams
Poems 1950-2003 (Edition RZ)
John Cage & Lajaren Hiller
HPSCHD (EMF)
Miki Yui
Lupe Luep Peul Epul (Line)
Ute Wassermann & Birgit Ulher
Kunststoff (Creative Sources)
Eberhard Blum
Fmsbw: Werke Für Sprechstimme Von Raoul Hausmann, Kurt Schwitters & Emmett Williams (Berlinische Galerie)
Christine Kubisch
On Air (Die Schachtel)
David Moss
Moss Tales (Edel)
Rolf Julius
Für Einen Kleinen See (Because Tomorrow Comes)
Akio Suzuki
Na Gi 1997 (Edition RZ)
Hermann Nitsch
Sinfonia Punta Campanella (Fondazione Morra)
Hans Arp/Kurt Schwitters/Raoul Hausmann
Dada > Antidada > Merz (Sub Rosa)
Junko Wada
Chidori (Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt book + DVD)
Yömrilak
The Selection Of Korean Classical Music (Edition RZ)

Compiled by Ursula Block, Gelbe Musik, Berlin, Germany

The Office Ambience

Link Wray
The Original Rumble (Ace)
The Stars
Perfect Place To Hideaway (Pedal)
Grateful Dead
Fillmore West 1969: The Complete Recordings (Grateful Dead)
Moondog
Moondog (Honest Jon's)
Hans Fjellestad
Kobe Live House (Accretions)
Masayuki Takayanagi Angry Waves
Dislocation (Jinya)
Various
Festival Genialer Dilletanten (Vinyl On Demand)
AGF.3 + Sua.C
Mini Movies (Asphodel)
Cat Power
The Greatest (Matador)
Milk From Cheltenham
Triptych Of Poisoners (Alga Marghen)
KK Null/Chris Watson/Z'EV
Number One (Touch Tone)
Town And Country
Up Above (Thrill Jockey)
Henri Pousseur
Paysages Planétaires (Alga Marghen)
Barrington Levy
In Dub: The Lost Mixes From King Tubby's Studio (Auralux)
Necropolis
Stalking Mark E Smith Around NYC (Columbus Discount Records)

Compiled by *The Wire* Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email charts@thewire.co.uk

The Doggie Boogie Bar, South Koenji, Tokyo (see Tetuzi Akiyama, page 22)

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London, UK
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Newcastle, UK

Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs and vinyl

Your call is held in a queue: Jamie Lidell (left) and FM Einheit

David Stubbs hails a collaboration that revisits dadaist ideas in the age of the Internet to hugely liberating effect

FM EINHEIT/JAMIE LIDELL/DAVID LINK/ SASKIA V KLITZING/VOLKER KAMP
ECHOHCE
FM 4 5.1 CD

Random text generation harks back at least to the beginnings of the early 20th century, with dadaist Tristan Tzara. He created a new form of verse by tearing up pages of older poetry, mixing the pieces up in a hat, then picking them out and reading them aloud. This attempt to abandon the conventional pathways of meaning and let loose the forces of chance in order to liberate more suppressed meanings would have a profound impact on modern art and even modern thinking, not all necessarily for the good. We could do, for example, with rather less anti-rationalism and relativism in our times.

Still, as this live album, recorded in November 2004 at the Dutch Electronic Art Festival in Rotterdam illustrates, the sheer sense of adventure and liberation alone afforded by such experimentation is enough to justify it. Saskia V Klitzing on drums and Volker Kamp on bass provide an excellent, openended rhythmical context here, but the key players in this quintet are vocalist Jamie Lidell, former Einsturzende Neubauten member FM Einheit (who plays "various instruments") and David Link, responsible for text and voice generators, also known as his "Poetry Machine". As the sleevenotes explain, the machine is "based on semantic networks. The program only contains routines to process text, no hardcoded datasets. It digests documents of human authors and extracts their associative interconnections. Its main source of information are the masses of text on the Internet." Once Lidell announced the title – "Rage", for example, for a song that had yet to exist – Link would have his computer generate a stream of associations related to the topic, which would emerge in the splendidly theatrical form of cascading reams of verbiage-sodden printout. From these Lidell would pick up handfuls that seemed meaningful to him, then make it the basis of his performance.

There's something inherently pleasing about the idea of text that would otherwise have vanished into the ether being snatched back and made manifest onstage. But when Lidell laconically comments of this performance, *"'Twas rocking"*, he gets to the nub. It's the sheer, physical gusto with which Lidell in particular takes up this frenetic, semi-improvised exercise which make it altogether different in temperature from the average sound installation. Much of this is down to the (self) abuse of his vocals, tweaked with, scuffed, echoplexed, obliterated in their own reverberations, sent spiralling off at fading tangents once sung and done with. His voice is strong enough to render such treatments superfluous, you might protest – but as the vocoderisations of Stevie Wonder and the late Roger Troutman of Zapp attest, there's an almost sinful pleasure in a great voice gratuitously messed and teched with.

The album begins with a track called "Rage", in which the process is laid bare in miniature – some telex-style tap-tapping, then the emergence of treated fragments of vocal. Then, a sudden hurricane of momentum with "Cocaine", as between them, Link and Lidell produce what sounds like an incoherent telephone argument over a looping, coruscating backbeat, with Einheit's interventions adding to the sense of a post-funklear wasteland. On the later-reprised "Disobey", Einheit's own customised noise makers strafe low like cropdusters, as Lidell's vocals scatter and split into groups. On "Interlude", featuring some lungbursting human beatbox, Einheit's signature is particularly strong, his interventions reminding you of heavy machinery overheating and gone haywire.

Amid all this joyful textual carnage, 'meanings' might not appear to be immediately evident. An exception is "Summertime", in which a host of synthesized vocals blurt forth as the music falls silent, caught in a looped repetition of the phrase *"Redwood flower"*, uttered with the same menace as the phrase "Red Rum" in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*. And then, it's briefly as if these robot characters have experienced a sort of depressing, romantic epiphany, as phrases like *"I thought I was strong"* and *"I'm old fashioned, I think it's impure"* totter in confused circles around the mix with an inexplicable, halting poignancy.

Ultimately, however, *Echohce* is not absolutely dependent on such outcomes. *"Another day at the office!"* quips Lidell early on, but this is anything but. Indeed, this album is the sort many had hoped and wished Lidell had made this year for Warp, rather than the altogether tidier and commercially ambitious *Multiply*. Lidell's art is in the right place here, working with the likes of Link and Einheit, who are responsible for "conception and production" and "composition" respectively. Between them, they've realised the pleasure of the text in full sonic effect. □

PHOTO: FOTO FABRY

ANGELS OF LIGHT & AKRON/FAMILY
AKRON/FAMILY & ANGELS OF LIGHT
YOUNG GOD CD

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

Akron/Family's moonlighting as Michael Gira's Angels Of Light took them on a 40-plus date tour playing a set under their own name and another behind Gira every night. Keen to capitalise on ecstatic crowd responses on the road and the energy manifesting itself in the performances, Gira immediately took the whole collaborative operation into the studio a week after the tour landed back in Brooklyn. This album was recorded in nine hardworking and transparently productive days. Five of the songs are Gira's compositions and the rest Akron/Family's own work, hence the split crediting of the album.

Gira proclaims that Akron/Family are his favourite 'rock band'. One understands and shares his need to use quotation marks. Whether working as Akron/Family or The Angels Of Light, they have a sound that recalls acts that have thrived on the collective consciousness of the group as creative bubble and gang mentality. "Awake" has a fingered electric guitar part straight from The Beatles' *White Album* and multi-part harmonies from *Abbey Road*. "Future Myth" has the mini-operatic quality of "Good Vibrations" with a lovely lush and pulsing coda that resolves with a bizarre moment of Casio synth nonsense. The solo voice of "Dylan Pt 2" repeats *"You've found what you're looking for"* with the timeless anguish and emotion The Band perfected. Gira takes lead vocals for a sympathetic and faithful reading of Bob Dylan's "I Pity The Poor Immigrant" that is infused with the autumn colours of upstate New York. A galumphing anthemic riot like "Moment", or the reflective and wheezing instrumental that segues into a strum-along lament in "We All Will", even recalls the ramshackle homilies and good times of The Faces. Yet despite these iconic influences, there is heart and integrity enough here to make them take the scare out of the scare quotes by sidestepping pastiche and parody. It would take a cold heart not to be moved by the psychedelia tinged rock 'n' roll pleasures of these performances.

ROBERT ASHLEY
CELESTIAL EXCURSIONS
LOVELY MUSIC 2XCD

BY LOUISE GRAY

Nearly 25 years ago, one of the recurrent questions Philip Glass was asked regarding Laurie Anderson's "O Superman" (1983) was, "How did it feel to be ripped off?" Anderson's song, taken from her massive *United States I-IV* project and a maverick hit single in its own right, had a distinctive uh-uh-uh sing-song rhythm that could, to some ears, seem over-influenced by the way Glass had scored voices in his breakthrough work of music theatre, 1976's *Einstein On The Beach*. There never was any rip-off, Glass would reiterate: New York's artists formed a community of interests, in which there never was any copyright on ideas. This anecdote is repeated here, only because Robert Ashley, although several years older than Glass (and even more than Anderson), is a composer whose work is very much less known than either of his two Manhattan compatriots. Which will beg the question in some quarters of which came first, the chicken or the egg?

It's a pointless query, but one repeated, simply because it would be easy to say that *Celestial Excursions* is rather Anderson-esque. There are brief similarities that all three composers share. Glass, Anderson and Ashley all work in music theatre, they all use (to greater or lesser extents) electronics; they have all used voices set to a kind of Sprechstimme style, where repetition and the very rhythm of words and phraseology takes over. And for Anderson and Ashley in particular, storytelling is an essential component of the way their works are structured and presented.

In brief, *Celestial Excursions* is an opera in an old fashioned sense: it is music theatre made of many parts. The music is made by an "electronic orchestra" – that is, a computer lab – played by Ashley and Tom Hamilton, with downtown fixture 'Blue' Gene Tyranny coming in on piano. There are a handful of vocalists, Joan La Barbara among them, and a silent character choreographed by Joan Jonas. The music for the three act work is, with the exception of a series of skittery preludes, mostly subdued and the concentration is on the sing-song voices that are mixed, phased and overlapped. Ashley's subject matter – old age – is an inspired choice, for it's here at the end of life that individual stories coalesce, recap and stop. Even so, the act titles – "Is It Light Yet?", "Asylum", "The River Deepens" – suggest that human finality takes place on a darkened stage. The music that Ashley and his singers inject into speech patterns makes something profound out of the prosaic, and it's often their intonation that makes the phrases memorable: *"And you thought the Greeks were barbaric", "There's hotdogs and there's chilli"*. Is repetition and verbal playfulness in Ashley's libretto intended to make reference to impaired hearing or the speech loops that patients with Alzheimer's get stuck in? Possibly not. *Celestial Excursions* is as much a statement on mental function as *Einstein*, which took its libretto from a young autistic writer, is on autism, which is to say that these things are tangential. That, said, Ashley presents a flow of life that, like one of his opera's central (and Joycean) phrases – *"The river deepens when it gets down to the sea, the river deepens"* – disappears in the ultimate dilution.

AUBE/MB
MECTPYO SAISEI
PARADISC CD

BY KEITH MOLINE

Maurizio Bianchi (MB) was the prime mover in the Italian Industrial tape underground of the early 80s, but quit recording later in the decade, reportedly unable to square his dark, extreme noise collages with his newly acquired religious beliefs. Returning to recording in the mid-90s with somewhat tepid material but steadily recovering his appetite for experimental rigour, he is back to his harrowing best on this very scary collaborative effort with Akifumi Nakajima aka Aube.

The combination of MB's opaque, soupy drones and Aube's searing filtered sound sources makes for a bracing listen. "Metamorphic Humus" is particularly vicious, sounding like the duo are taking blowtorches to their laptops. There are some chinks of light – the blissed out feedback of "M Resurrection" momentarily hinting at some accommodation of his theistic concerns with his misanthropic outlook, but the tone soon darkens. Like much of Bianchi's work, the album suggests an attempt to explore connections between post-industrial alienation and contemporary psychosis. He may have failed to find a way to evoke the positives of his religious convictions on disc, but the loud "No!" that is *Mectpyo Saisei* is all the more invigorating for it.

PIERRE BASTIEN
POP
REPHLEX CD

BY DEREK WALMSLEY

Many rhythm sections are described as running like clockwork, but in Pierre Bastien's case it might actually be true. On the cover of *Pop* is one of the machines behind his music – an African drum encased in Meccano and gears, striking itself with a curved beater. There are no instrumental credits inside the CD, but instead innumerable photos of the musical contraptions Bastien began building in 1986 – miniature marvels of engineering which look like the Victorian contraption gracing the cover of Orb's *Pomme Fritz*, or perhaps a mechanical diagram from Leonardo Da Vinci's notebooks.

The seven tracks of *Pop* share an insistent, perpetual motion of pops and taps that suggest a spiritual relative of To Rococo Rot or Mouse On Mars' miniaturist dance music. Bastien's contraptions could be described as sound art, but the music has a feel of mechanical rigour. Even without effects, the struck percussion and plucked strings are recorded so close that they have immediate physical presence. One might expect the movements of these machines to be funk-less, but just as Kraftwerk's stiffness made them even more funky for Detroit producers, Bastien's twitchy dance of the marionettes becomes more gripping as it gets ever more fidgety.

The occasional keyboard tone cluster hints at hidden depths to the music, but for the most part *Pop* remains a wonderfully uncontextualised oddity. It would provide the perfect soundtrack to a Quay Brothers animation – neither music or film with fixed meaning or direction, but the motion and mechanics alone become a matter of rapt contemplation.

BIGG JUS
POOR PEOPLE'S DAY
MUSH CD

BY TOM PERCHARD

You might have agreed with every placard you saw at Genoa, Seattle and London, but you wouldn't have read them aloud one by one and called it rap. This angry indictment of geopolitical mendacity, machination and immorality shows that since 2001's *Black Mamba Serums*, Bigg Jus has stopped caring for rhyme, flow, indeed anything other than the standalone slogan: his lyrics are printed in the CD booklet, all caps, a full stop closing each line, and never has a rapper's meaning and delivery lost less on the page. *"For every dollar it receives in aid the Third World spends 13 on debt repayment. Slavery and theft industrialised your world and civilised it."*

How to turn such social fact into art, and then make society recognise that art as a reflection of itself? One of the defining characteristics of the first hiphop generation was that it appeared to give a shit, the crosshairs of Public Enemy's logo being formed of radical political expression and genuine popular support. Those were the days. So old consciousness signifiers abound here: Malcolm X speaks, an exhausted Afrocentrism is revived long enough to be driven up the side of a pyramid one last time, the voices of BDP, Lyte and Shan check in as guarantors of a Golden Age commitment. But the visionary narrative, image and metaphor with which people like KRS-One and Chuck D sparked a culture's imagination contrasts something chronic with Bigg Jus's monochromia, a vocabulary which attacks corporatisation and the bureaucratic classes while strangling itself with the red tape of procedure. It's all cliche, all *"industrial military complex", "police state retribution", "JP Morgan, Citigroup and World Bank"*. Those puffed-chest voices from the past shame Jus's nose/throat whinny, and as the rapper is deprived of air so is the listener. Hearing this is not to be inspired by the passion of an artful rabble rouser, but to be suffocated by tear gas.

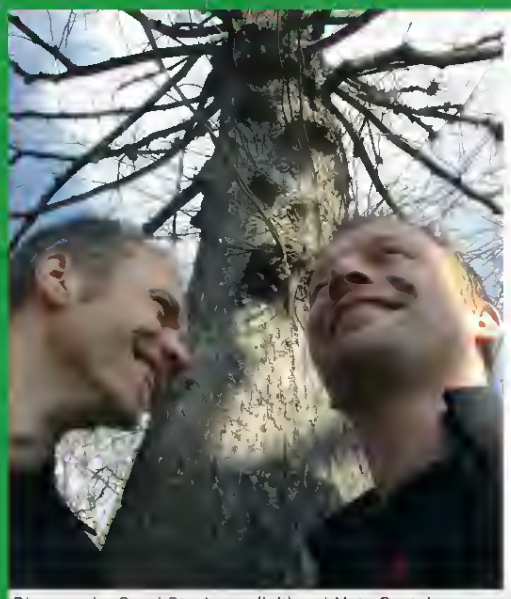
Producer DJ Gman can only save a couple of tracks – the boring threat rap of "Supa Nigga" is swathed in gorgeous strings, and "When They Start" moves from boombap to rolling breakbeat, mechanical hegemony.

BLUE COLLAR
LOVELY HAZEL
PUBLIC EYESORE CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

This second outing by Blue Collar finds trumpeter Nate Wooley, trombonist Steve Swell and percussionist Tatsuya Nakatani continuing their quest to find common ground between today's world of extended techniques and more conventional notions of interval, contour and rhythm. Though recorded at the same September 2003 sessions as the group's debut release on Rossbin, the intriguingly titled ____ *is an apparition*, there's no question of this being a selection of material rejected for the earlier album. Indeed, when taken as a whole, *Lovely Hazel*'s nine improvisations come across as a more coherent and satisfying set.

Tatsuya Nakatani's role is pivotal: though incredibly sensitive to nuance and distinctly sensual in his approach to the kit – excuse me while I kiss the cymbals – he can also "generate incredible rhythmic propulsion while at the same time keeping the sound transparent", to quote (once more) John Butcher in *The Wire* 224. Butcher was referring to John Stevens, but his description applies just as well to Nakatani, who like Stevens is equally at home playing delicate micro improv with the likes of Michel Doneda, Jack Wright and Audrey Chen as he is muscular free jazz and even straight ahead bossa nova with Yukijunshi. His loose yet deft freebop gives the horn players plenty to bounce off. The interplay on the livelier tracks is thrilling, and in the pitch domain Wooley proves a perfect match for Swell, who's honed his chops with free jazz legends Anthony Braxton, Herb Robertson and Joe McPhee. The traffic is two way, too – Swell's own mastery of pops, clicks, fizzes and growls wouldn't have been out of place on Wooley's recent Creative Sources release *Wrong Shape To Be A Story Teller* (reviewed in *The Wire* 260). But it's not all



Blue moods: David Stackenas (left) and Mats Gustafsson

A free jazz homage to the blues from two Swedish improvisors makes the most of European-American musical differences, argues Brian Morton

MATS GUSTAFSSON & DAVID STACKENÄS
MOUNTAIN BLUES FROM SWEDEN
ATAVISTIC CD

Tomas Tranströmer is the Swedish poet who gave Jan Garbarek the title *It's OK To Listen To The Gray Voice*. Partially disabled by a stroke in 1990, his work increasingly explored the physical and philosophical limits of expression. As "death bends over me", he struggles calmly to find a language that communicates the briefest scintillae of experience. Back in 1996, inspired by Liszt's *Lugubrious Gondola* piano pieces, he wrote a sequence of sorrow-songs that invested his characteristic surreal style with an ever deeper humanity. In *Sorgegondolen*, he writes "Det enda jag vill säga/glimmar utom räckhåll/som silvret/hos pantlånaren" ("What I have to say gleams just out of reach, like silver in a pawn shop"). No better way to catch the impact of these extraordinary blues/not blues for saxophone and guitar: raw, hocked, eloquent in their inarticulacy and with a constant sense of something familiar, once owned, but now out of pocket and out of place.

Mats Gustafsson's adapted instruments always have a lumber-room quality, be they Heath Robinson hybrids like his fluteophone, or the rickety staccato-vibrato of a crumpled can stuffed in the bell. Here he sticks to the baritone, his signature horn, and plays it with a lowing, mournful tonality and tired tonguings. Guitarist Stackenas is the wayward godson of Derek Bailey and Fred Frith, and like them plays free with such a perverse logic of development one can readily imagine him giving a sharp shrug and grinding out an orthodox 12-bar, loose strung, unconventionally pitched and voiced, cheerfully innumerate as to measures and choruses. John Fahey might be another source for his work on *Mountain Blues From Sweden*.

If the blues form is a foxtrot, much slowed and invested with what Eric Blom notoriously described as "a deliberately contrived dismal atmosphere", these six pieces are more like warped tangos, that Latin form that has put down anomalous roots in Scandinavia. Their folkish components are unmistakable, their distance from jazz rhythm unavoidable, but, as Ken Vandermark points out in his crisp, wise sleevenote, the whole point here is that often debated distance between American and European perceptions of time and rhythm and functional harmony.

The real sorrow-songs come first and last, in "Shave 'Em Wet" (dedicated to Memphis Minnie) and "Rotten Herring Blues" (to tubaist Per-Åke Holmlander). Gustafsson's baritone lows like an alphorn, suggesting that 'mountain blues' might be a distinct new form. After the relatively skittish, slap-tongued wing of "Bumble Bee Blues", the tonality darkens again at the start of "Built To Do What You Did Last Night" (a dedication to Howlin' Wolf), which moves with saurian slowness across its length. Again, Stackenäs hints at the blues with deliberate obliqueness in his opening measures; once the track is properly underway, he sounds closer to a koto or zither player. The mixing, by Guy Picciotto of Fugazi, brings Gustafsson's unvoiced tones and breath-noises to the fore. At times, it sounds as if he is blowing directly across his pads, so fleeting and evanescent are the sounds he is making. Stackenäs returns with what might almost be detuned flamenco and though the baritone returns with more slapped tones and honks, he dominates the rest of the cut.

"You Have To Get Low As A Toad Again" is a strange, hesitant thing, covert and clandestine but with a moving simplicity. It's dedicated to Hound Dog Taylor, the six fingered slide master who died 30 years ago this month, lung cancer just beating the judge who'd certainly have put him away for wounding fellow Mississippian Brewer Phillips during a drunken brawl in Son Seals's apartment. Hound Dog's plaintively defiant slide sounds are, if anywhere, more evident on "Bumble Bee Blues", but the lineage still makes a certain sense here.

"Take Your Hand Off It" very nearly settles into a groove, a fast 8/8 with Gustafsson punching in the metre with what by this stage have become slightly routinised lip-smacks and reed-slaps. More than once, Stackenäs almost hijacks the set, and this is his finest moment, beautifully focused and concentrated playing.

The most obvious homage on the set is Gustafsson's low growl on "Rotten Herring Blues", which might almost be coming from one of Holmlander's low brasses. It's not quite clear what Stackenäs is doing here, or how he's creating the alarm-bell drone that moves steadily from back- to foreground. This is where he sounds most like Fahey, in one of his more abstract Asiatic moods. It's a longform piece, the most extended of the set, and brings *Mountain Blues* to a suitably dramatic and ambiguous climax.

I was startled during the summer to hear a Swedish jazz administrator describe Gustafsson as one of the older figures on the Swedish free scene (he's 41, for God's sake). It's a description that bears testimony not only to the saxophonist's headlong productivity since the late 80s, but also the rate at which a much younger generation has come through behind him and claimed him as an influence. With a strong collaborative base in Germany (where he broke cover while working with Sven-Åke Johansson) and in America (where he often plays with Ken Vandermark and Hamid Drake, as well as with Peter Brotzmann's Stateside line-up), though not yet a comparable profile in the UK, and despite his appearance at 1990's Company week and a memorable BBC Radio 3 appearance with Barry Guy and Raymond Strid, Gustafsson still sounds most comfortable when working at home and with fellow Swedes. This may be grist to Vandermark's argument about being divided by a common language, or it may just be habit and familiarity. *Mountain Blues From Sweden* is his most consistently satisfying date yet, estimable in its control (a quality Gustafsson sometimes overlooks), genuinely moving in its idiosyncratic shadowing of the Devil's music. There's nothing gray about these voices and it's more than OK listening to them. □

cut and thrust: there's plenty of space for the musicians to stretch out, notably on "48/2", where Nakatani's bowed cymbals and gongs combine with the horns' sustained tones to weave a rich web of resonant harmonics, bringing to a close one of the most impressive and rewarding Improv releases of the year.

TOM CARTER & ROBERT HORTON DUO
LUNAR ECLIPSE
IMPORTANT CD

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

Tom Carter takes a break from Charalambides to work on these celestial inspired duos with long serving San Francisco scenester Robert Horton. The duo discovered that without any intention on their part, the 30 hours of recordings these pieces are culled from took place on dates of astronomical significance -- the autumn equinox, winter solstice and lunar eclipse of 2004. These celestial events retrospectively provided inspiration for the titles of the eight pieces presented here.

It is hard not to hear the music of the spheres and the subtle energies of the alignments of the planets in these performances. The otherworldly sounds are provided by Horton's homemade instruments that include not only the boot and bowed boot but various misappropriated electronic devices and sex toys including vibrator, sex machine and the mysterious sex machine (B). Over these Carter plays lap steel, electric, slide, E-bowed and prepared guitar.

Opener "Lunar Eclipse" sets the standard with a long, invariant drone. "Hunter's Moon" emerges from a tinkling passage into the maelstrom created by rifling the innards of a piano, before a guitar rises snaking and spiralling into a siren call climax and encouragement to the hungry foragers who track prey by the light and shadows of the moon. "Equinoxium" provides more long droning as the planets describe zeniths and azimuths through the heavens. Chirrups, futters, minuscule rustles and skipping tones rest over a stately broad flux of organ on "Through Earth's Shadow" before "Bassism" glowers with its low, rumbling drone, slowly cresting and roiling like a stream of magma. A point of dark loss is signalled by "During Totality" as the hidden imagination of images against a closed eyelid leads us to a pure nocturnal carnival of utter blackness, before the rude human intervention of "Sets The Clock Back" wrests us back to the horologist's requirements with a noisy eruption dwindling into panning feedback swells.

It concludes with "Glimmers", a rattling, churning cry of the day reborn from a supernatural darkness into the banal chaos of the everyday.

GENDOS CHAMZYRYN
KAMLANIYE
LONG ARMS CD

BY CLIVE BELL

'Kamlaniye' is an open air shaman's ritual -- Ken Hyder talked about attending them in his interview in *The Wire* 262. Gendos Chamzyryn has a trio called K-Space with Hyder and Tim Hodgkinson, but his earlier unit was a Tuvan shaman Improv spectacular called Biosintes. Chamzyryn's speciality is taking shamanic performance out of the forests and villages, and putting it on stage. Even though the primary concerns of that performance are not musical, there are obvious musical and improvisational elements.

Chamzyryn's solo album, recorded in a Moscow studio in February 2004, employs a Chinese zither, jaws harp, bells and sundry rattles, intensified by his passionate, highly individual bass overtone singing. There's nothing neat or studied about his playing -- it's more a free jazz shamanism, or like the Siberian wind blasting through the trees. The wild strumming of the zither is particularly otherworldly. By halfway through, Chamzyryn's dizzy growling, corybantic bell ringing and rapidly changing drum patterns have pushed out towards the farther shores of Lake Weird. I expected him to eventually run amok, maybe chewing the carpet and vomiting onto the microphones, so I was a tad disappointed when he merely segued into another jaws harp solo.

It's hard to know what to make of *Chamzyryn* -- there's much passion and not a lot of artfulness. To take shamanic ritual elements out of their context can leave the listener unsure what exactly this performance is about. As Hyder himself puts it, "Why are people doing it?" To say that musically not a great deal is happening feels almost like a category mistake, like watching a surgeon at work and complaining about his choreography.

LAWRENCE ENGLISH
HAPPINESS WILL BEFALL
CRÓNICA CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

"Music is a memory bank for finding one's way about the world," says Arkady Volchok in Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*. It could be a fitting description for much recent field recording based electronic music by the likes of Michael Rüsenberg, Loren Chasse, Eric La Casa and Aki Onda, whose photography graces the cover of Australian sound artist Lawrence English's first release on the Portuguese Crónica imprint. But while the songlines on English's earlier *Ghost Towns* crossed the "remote settlements that litter the vast Australian plains", *Happiness Will Befall*, like its predecessor *Transit* (Cajid) released earlier this year, travels further afield. It uses recordings made in Southern India, Singapore and New Zealand, as well as English's native Brisbane, over which the composer's guitar and electronics layer long, resonant spans of melody.

His fondness for clearly identifiable melodic cells and textural richness and warmth also recalls the work of Oren Ambarchi. "Adrift" and "I've Been Happy Like This" are first cousins to Ambarchi's *Triste* and his work with 4g on the recent Erstwhile *Cloud*. There's a real feel for the wide open spaces here, and English knows just how to render them into sound -- it's a shame Jérôme Noetinger has discontinued the Cinema For The Ear series on Métamkine, as it would be the ideal home for this music -- but his landscapes aren't confined to the outback and rainforest. "Parallel (Midgap)" features the uniquely forlorn sound of a distant underground train, which, in conjunction with the composer's fine ear for pitch, imbues the music with a poetic depth and melancholy all too often lacking in today's electronica.

MARCO FUSINATO
0_SYNAESTHESIA EDITION
SYNAESTHESIA 4XLP

BY JON DALE

Marco Fusinato is one of Australia's most interesting art interventionists. His work crosses media forms without recourse to the tired blandishments of the stereotypical 'multimedia artist', and when he works within music, his approach is conceptually meticulous. His Solver duo, which he shares with Australian artist John Nixon, creates eviscerating slabs of free noise; his series of guitarronist recordings entitled *Free* are gripping and hilarious, Fusinato swooping on unsuspecting guitar shop tech-heads with dive-bombing raids of feedback. Fusinato's greatest works, though, are his 'empty records', which have gone through several gallery permutations before reaching the *0_Synaesthesia Edition* series.

These four 'unplayable' records may not consist of any 'recorded information' per se but they are, of course, completely predetermined art objects whose ultimate audio output is rigorously delimited. Each of the records in the edition has grooves pressed into the vinyl that are variably concentric and off-centre, so they overlap and create patterns of grooves. The number of grooves pressed on each record also increases as the series progresses -- the first edition (SYN 013) is quite spartan, whereas the final in the series (SYN 016) is densely packed, full of grooves that cut across each other. The records are beautiful to look at, theoretically precise and 'complete' in the sense that playing them seems to be an added extra to the form itself -- they certainly don't require audition to achieve completeness. When you do play them, you take part in some kind of DIY egalitarian experience, your long-suffering stylus directing the 'composition'.

0_Synaesthesia Edition is certainly a fascinating intervention. Yet if Fusinato's desire is to "defeat our expectations of what a record is", as Bruce Russell states in *The Wire* 255, his work here does hinge him to another renegade tradition, of the 'conceptual record' or anti-record, with just as lengthy and concrete a history as that of the 'traditional record'. After the interventions of artists like Ken Friedman (with his *Zen For Record* release of a record with no sound), Milan Knizak and the many anti-records of GX Jupitter-Larsen of The Haters, Fusinato's editions for 'extreme grooves' are firmly entrenched within a certain art (or anti-art) discourse. Not that there is anything wrong with that. Maybe Fusinato would agree with Jupitter-Larsen's statement, "just because you're not hearing anything doesn't mean you're not listening to something."

GATO LIBRE
STRANGE VILLAGE
MUZAK CD

BY PHIL FREEMAN

Trumpeter Natsuki Tamura and his normally piano-playing wife Satoko Fujii release a staggering amount of discs. She's got at least three groups of various sizes going, almost all of which feature Tamura's horn, and he's got a quartet of his own in which she plays -- sometimes piano, sometimes synth. They've also teamed up for Improv sessions with Western players like Elliott Sharp. Now he's got this group,

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K-Space (left to right): Tim Hodgkinson, Gendos Chamzyryn, Ken Hyder

K-Space's latest album draws on layered sound sources, extensive field research and years steeped in musical traditions ranging from Improv to shamanism. By Julian Cowley

K-SPACE
GOING UP
AD HOC CD

Bear Bones, the 2002 release by shamanic improvising trio K-Space, has provided some of the richest and most absorbing repeated listening I've experienced from a CD in recent years. It's potent, stimulating and uproarious music. *Going Up*, the sequel from Scottish drummer Ken Hyder, English multi-instrumentalist Tim Hodgkinson and Tuvan throat singer and percussionist Gendos Chamzyryn, promises to be still more rewarding and illuminating through time. Above and beyond procedures of improvised music making, K-Space is a longterm research project. It was established nearly a decade ago, in the course of one of Hyder's and Hodgkinson's Radical Transcultural Initiatives, taking musical experimentation to rural communities in southern Siberia, where they encountered Chamzyryn and found common ground.

For *Going Up*, these musicians have superimposed performances from different occasions and places, some dating back to Hyder and Hodgkinson's initial trip to Siberia in 1990, but also concerts staged in Western Europe. These recordings, with their disparate acoustic properties, are overlaid and overlapped to form dense sonic thickets alive with action and event, palpably embedded in the multidimensional flux of the world and lived social structures. Human voices conversing, footfalls on frozen ground, a blackbird singing, the sound of the wind or water, the crackling of wood in a fire, audience applause – sounds from specific sites with their own peculiar resonance and significance leak through the K-Space mesh into the listening present.

This layering and the filtering through of discrete geographic and temporal occasions compounds that superimposition already at work in the trio, the piling up and overlap of intense personal experience. Chamzyryn, a bona fide shaman and folk artist; Hodgkinson, academically trained in social anthropology, an exploratory rock musician, composer and radical improvisor; Hyder, jazz drummer, free player, inveterate field worker in remote musical worlds. Chamzyryn brings his astonishing deep overtone singing and the trance tempo beat of his dungur shaman drum. Hodgkinson plays lap steel guitar and reeds. Hyder, heard drumming and singing, tells me that this music puts into practice "a whole lot of things we've learned over a very long time". But that practical knowledge and acquired technique inhere in the substance of this remarkable montage; it's never really a matter of who's playing what or how. Other instruments feature; other sounds whose source is unclear.

K-Space offer an invitation to immersive listening, to jettison auditory compass, watch and map and plunge beyond familiar coordinates, into the openness, instability and fluidity of their singular music. *Going Up* layers episodes of instrumental, vocal and environmental sound activity to induce states of listening that don't merely involve expectations being met. It creates its own contexts, shifting shape, juggling time, volatile with details realigning on each listen. And it carries the imprint of a lived world that admits fascination as well as intensity of physical experience.

The name K-Space refers to theories of Russian astrophysicist Nicolai Kozyrev, who argued that time is a conduit for energy. He developed a kind of time machine, a spiral room which Hyder and Hodgkinson entered during their travels. Cast into darkness, Hyder experienced a sensation of flying. Both men were moved at a level that they feel reluctant or unable to put into words. The scientist, it seems, was in pursuit of wisdom transmitted among shamans.

Arcane science, esoteric lore and its fallout in musical practice that departs from regulative norms prevailing even in much avant garde Western music. It's difficult to write of K-Space without sounding uncomfortably portentous. But it really does offer redress for the flimsy pretensions of the many market oriented cross-cultural hybrid musical confections that have been manufactured during the past few years. In his recent interview with Will Montgomery (*The Wire* 262), Hyder speaks from the inside of K-Space in ways that are entirely persuasive, restoring gritty credibility to the vocabulary of 'spirit', while making a case for the excitements and revelations of creative disorientation. Far removed from the weightlessness of World Music impressionism and the sham of New Age flotsam, *Going Up*, as Hyder rightly observes, approaches the condition of "total music". The crucial thing is to hear and feel it. It's made for those of us who want listening to remain a real adventure and an ongoing process of discovery. □

within which Fujii plays accordion. There's also a bassist and a guitarist, but no drummer. As might be expected, the music drifts a little; the opening cut is called "Morning Mist", while others sport titles like "Gentle Journey" and my personal favourite, "Wasteland Of Peat", which concludes the album.

There are moments when Fujii comes to the fore, dominating proceedings, and the sound approaches the neighbourhood of French folk, or the version of it that might be heard in a Paris-set movie scene, right before the speeding sports cars of the American heroes crash through, overturning fruit carts and whipping around corners. But for most of its hour-plus running time, this is music that wouldn't mind if it could have the listener's attention for just a second, if it's no bother, but it's not important, really, and if not that's fine, too. It's difficult to believe this is the work of Natsuki Tamura, whose hyper-aggressive electrified horn produced 2DD4's astonishing (in several different ways) *Hada Hada*. Clearly, he needs a drummer behind him at all times.

GRIZZLY BEAR
HORN OF PLENTY
RUMRAKET CD

BY DEREK WALMSLEY

Spectral acoustic ambience, zoological moniker, group member named Christopher Bear — much about *Horn Of Plenty* hints at a connection to fellow New Yorkers Animal Collective. Yet Grizzly Bear is a project originally conceived in bedroom isolation. Ed Droste's spare home recordings were fleshed out in the studio and released to acclaim in America last year. Now rereleased on Efterklang's Copenhagen based Rumraket label, this European issue comes with a CD of remixes from the likes of The Soft Pink Truth and, it so happens, Paw Tracks family member Ariel Pink.

Droste's guitar chords have few choruses or structures, just an instinctive, weary gravitas, reminiscent of the dry, mundane beauty of The Beatles' *White Album*. Yet gliding overdubs of bells and harmonies and reprocessed vocals and warm filters leaven the brooding feel of Droste's songs and give *Horn Of Plenty* a transient, shadowy elegance. The CD of likeminded remixes further distorts the originals into weirdly kinked topological oddities. Hisham Bharoocha and Rusty Santos reduce "Campfire" to a plaintive vocal and bell, as if carried on the wind from miles away; Ariel Pink's tape edits and cheap effects are both primitive and tender, as if he's presenting Grizzly Bear with a homemade birthday card.

Although both discs have an unfinished feeling — the vocals are almost indecipherable, guitar patterns are offhand — this somehow counts as a strength rather than weakness. *Horn Of Plenty* is acoustic music willing and able to efface its own identity, to transform and transmute itself ad infinitum.

DAVID GRUBBS
TWO SOUNDTRACKS FOR ANGELA BULLOCH
BOTTROP BOY CD

BY CLIVE BELL

British artist Angela Bulloch creates work with film, light and colour, often with a soundtrack. Her 1993 piece titled *Tyson Spinks Sound Mat* is a doormat that, each time you step on it, plays a radio commentary of a notoriously brief heavyweight championship fight. More recently, Bulloch has been translating film episodes into colour compositions on her 'pixel boxes'. Thus the explosion scene from Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* is metamorphosed into a wall of shifting squares of light.

"Z Point", the first track here, is David Grubbs's soundtrack for Bulloch's piece of the same name. Grubbs, veteran of Gastr Del Sol, cuts together choral fragments, voices speaking German, drones, blow-ups, always taking his time. Just when the ear has settled into his aural collage, Grubbs changes tack, reaches for his guitars and conjures up a rock revene. Acoustic twang contrasts with a heavily distorted electric guitar melody. A car drives off and the guitars fade, making for a satisfying eight minutes of sound, clear-headed but mysterious — in other words, classic Grubbs.

The 13 minute "Horizontal Technicolour", which occupies the rest of the disc, is more monochrome, consisting largely of a drifting, distorted instrument that I took to be guitar, but is apparently a Korg synth wazzed through some pedals. Chunks of Grubbs's grubby, blistered sound are broken up by pauses. Rather than drug us with atmospherics, Grubbs lets us hear the room sound at the ends of phrases, so the piece sounds like playing as opposed to Ambient wash. But fans of Grubbs's way with words and the inspired, off the wall pop writing of 2002's *Rickets & Scurvy* may feel a little short-changed.

BEN GWILLIAM & LEE PATTERSON
COLLABORATIVE IMPOSITIONS
NEW ACOUSTICAL PLEASURES CD-R

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Collaborative Impositions consists of three tracks totalling 28 minutes, the latter two recorded live during March 2005, minus an audience, at an artists' studio in Cow Lane, Salford. The first piece was performed four months later at Daniel Weaver's Alectro-Ecoustic night at Oklahoma, a small basement venue in Manchester's northern quarter. These tracks should be of great interest to anyone keen to explore the common currency between sound art and free improvisation.

Lee Patterson has, in the last couple of years, become notorious for his use of piping hot, wet bottles placed neck down on an amplified metal plate, the sounds of which are then fed through a mixer and employed according to musical need. This is one of the instruments/techniques he employs on track two, along with springs, bowls, fried egg recordings (another of his fascinations) and field recordings. On this track, Ben Gwilliam plays bowed shot glass, contact miked dictaphone and prepared 'field recordings' (which could consist of pretty much anything). But really, further specification probably wouldn't be of much use in identifying sources, as almost nothing sounds like you imagine it would (or should).

There is, for example, a sequence on this track featuring what sounds like a sub-bass marimba, but I've no idea how it was made. The same is true of various elements of tracks one and three. 'Nicely inscrutable' is one of the general notes I made during my first listen to this recording. Some things are, perhaps inevitably, more obvious: the electric toothbrush on a contact miked metal plate (track one) and the battery-operated fan and bowls and ball-bearings (track three). But Gwilliam's and Patterson's music often seems tantalisingly out of reach, so subtle in presentation that it verges on intangibility, so adrift of listener expectations that it's easier just to sit back, let it happen and enjoy it for what it is, or seems to be.

HACO/DIANE LABROSSE/ MARTIN TÉTREAULT
LUNCH IN NISHINOMIYA
IMPROVISED MUSIC FROM JAPAN CD

BY KEITH MOLINÉ

Former After Dinner member Haco is best known as a singer, but *Lunch In Nishinomiya* sees her restricting herself to electronics, alongside prolific Canadian improvisors Labrosse and Tétreault. Although their styles are almost diametrically opposed, the album bears comparison with the recent electronic work of Keiji Haino, in that both artists manage to transmit the essentials of their aesthetic through different means to those they habitually employ. In Haino's case, it was unremitting intensity and unmediated expressiveness. In Haco's, it is dry, wry astringency, a careful insistence on never sugaring the pill with melodrama.

The album is ostensibly structured around the preparation and consumption of the afternoon meal, though whether it employs treated location recordings of chopping and chomping is unclear. It's a work of tiny gestures, which slowly draws you in and forces you to listen on a different, microscopically reduced scale, and while the musicians fight shy of broad brushstrokes, they manage to concoct something rich in incident and atmosphere.

The soundworld of *Lunch In Nishinomiya* is reduced like a rich sauce, allowed to bubble away almost to nothing, leaving the faintest trace of its existence like a lingering, bitter aroma. "Boiling" is alive with restless, minuscule detail, as wisps of looped feedback coil around each other. The mini-slapstick of the first part of "In The Fridge" gives way to denser, more worrying tones, though such distinctions can only be perceived within the scaled down perspective the improvisors painstakingly establish in the album's opening stages.

HASEGAWA-SHIZUO
GENE PACKS
PSF CD

BY JON DALE

Close to two decades on from its first releases — the careening, high intensity rock of High Rise and Fushitsusha — PSF still has a stranglehold on the title of strongest Japanese label. Its roster has solidified over time, as the label fires out missives from figures like Keiji Haino, Kan Mikami and Kazuki Tomokawa as regular as clockwork. However, some of its most inspiring releases come from unknown or unexpected groupings. This new release from the duo of Hirotomo Hasegawa, once of punk group Aburadako, and Shizuo Uchida, who spent time in Haino's Nijiumu outfit, is a case in point.

Although its basic building blocks of mysterious improvisation and accreting drone abrasions echo through the PSF catalogue, Hasegawa and Uchida have a fiercely individual take on the form. *Gene Packs* is a live recording

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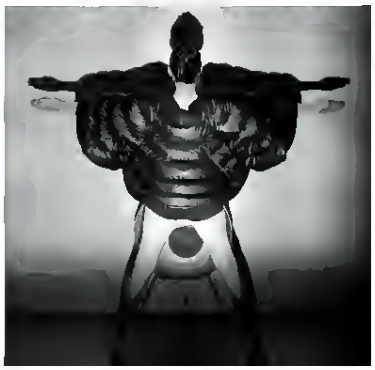

www.hathut.com hat One should be one's time. Il faut être de son temps. Edouard Manet, 1860

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from earlier this year, with Hasegawa on hichiriki and vocals and Uchida on bass and one string, both players also use loops. Hasegawa blows vicious lungfuls of air through the hichiriki, sending it squealing and vibrating. When he turns to vocals, Hasegawa's scattershot grunts and sighs spike the plangent prodding and heavy textural rumble of Uchida's bass.

The first two improvisations are short and slight, utilising brackets of silence as a framing gesture. This contrasts with the closing track "Adios", which undulates under the heavy pressure created by the duo's deep gasps of breath and moan and vibrating, circuitous loops of thick smoke.

FRITZ HAUSER
DEEP TIME
DEEP LISTENING 2XCD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

In 1991 the Pauline Oliveros Foundation commissioned Swiss percussionist Fritz Hauser to write a piece for The Deep Listening Band. Hauser created *Deep Time* for improvisors plus a tape composition that features sounding stones and the sounds of clocks and watches. In October 1994 in a New York studio, with Oliveros playing accordion and Expanded Instrument System, David Gamper using electronics and miscellaneous small instruments, and saxophonist Urs Leimgruber, Hauser recorded the two 32 minute versions which were edited in 1998 and are issued on these two CDs. Regular timekeeping is not Hauser's primary percussive concern, and *Deep Time* subordinates mechanical measure to concern with textured duration and biorhythmic figures. Oliveros seems, like Leimgruber, to breathe calmly through sound.

Although both versions were recorded in Gamper's basement rather than some cave or subterranean reservoir, each bears traces of The Deep Listening Band's characteristically favoured echoing acoustic. Version two is more vigorous with more assertiveness from the taped timepieces, but in both versions this is attentive and spacious music, the players coexisting within a shared meditative environment rather than competing for the foreground or asserting technical prowess. It takes a different kind of drummer, though, to play in the company of Oliveros. Hauser has the profound musical sensitivity to integrate with her playing and enhance it. In his composition and performance of *Deep Time*, he confirms his affinity with her Deep Listening orientation while supplying us with coordinates for contemplation through music.

HECQ
BAD KARMA
HYMEN CD

BY MATTHEW INGRAM

Hecq's third album is the kind of record of which one assumes there are hundreds. Scanning the catalogue of Hymen Records throws up lots of equally obscure names like L'Ombre, Lusine ICL, Snog and Beefcake, artists unknown outside of the tiny gene pool of post-Techno, who, one imagines, make records just like Hecq's – that's to say, sleek and eldritch by default, programmed with terrifying attention to detail on the latest kit. However, I wonder if any of their work is quite as satisfying as *Bad Karma*?

Hecq, aka Benny Boysen, has a superb grasp of rhythm. He manipulates glitch's hiccoughs and tics into finely fibred black steel webs, occasionally coopting sampled drum and bass patterns, tom toms and tablas into his filigrees. It's refreshing to hear electronica not destined for the dancefloor seizing upon rhythm's visceral power and inherent melodic qualities (the drums here are exquisitely tuned).

Tracks like "(Untitled)", a dark froth of softly rolling congas and aleatory shifts in timbre, are seductively blank-eyed, perfectly embodying the spirit of BOB State's "Flow Coma". "Scumdrum", another highlight, uses a darbuka drum and nimbly weaves its characteristic hard Middle Eastern sound through a minefield of galloping hiphop breaks. Also excellent is the half-paralysed clunk-skank of "Into The Unseen". All of these rhythmic palettes have been cryogenically frozen in the same sonic cold storage, strafed with Hecq's signature lift shaft Doppler effects, sounding the way dry ice looks.

KATO HIDEKI
GREEN ZONE
DOUBT MUSIC CD

BY TOM RIDGE

The invasion of Iraq has generated thousands of words of criticism and commentary, and ignited, in some quarters at least, some fiery lyricism. Japanese bassist Kato Hideki, based in New York since the early 90s, has forged an entirely wordless response to the state of things, with what he describes as "a documentary film without pictures". Assembling his old Ground-Zero cohorts Otomo Yoshihide (guitar) and Masahiro Uemura (drums), Hideki recorded the material collected here live in the studio in Tokyo, and the music's raw immediacy is thrillingly evident. Beginning with an ominous, if somewhat literal, approximation of artillery fire and explosions through Uemura's sharp bursts of percussion, the music then coheres into a sinuous rhythm, anchored by Hideki's bass, while Otomo works through some squally wah-wah patterns. This is supple but tense, stretched out to incorporate jabbing, syncopated bass runs.

Much of the first part of the album continues in this vein, alternating sustained, pulsating grooves with noisy, climactic crescendos. After an interlude provided by the loose atmospherics of "Oil & Water", on "Enemy Within" the sound becomes more varied, mixing up heavy distortion with jazzy spaciousness, and peaking with the epic "Curtains Of Grief" and "Agent Orange 2". Here, probing Improv collides with atomic fuzz-blues, delivering both a satisfying crunch and openended exploration. Little of this makes any direct attempt at representing the actual sound of war (as exemplified by Hendrix's "Machine Gun"), but instead builds up a relentless barrage of sound and fury, while retaining an absolute sense of purpose, and an ability to incorporate melodic subtleties while effectively capturing a sense of destruction and desolation.

INITIAL PRAYER
THE LAST MEN IN EUROPE
CORROSIVE GROWTH CD

BY SAM DAVIES

Initial Prayer make their recorded debut here, long after first surfacing live on the UK noise scene of the early 80s, and announce on the inner sleeve that 'This document constitutes an element of the conspectus of all and everything'. A statement that could arguably be applied to any release in this magazine, any magazine in the shop you bought this issue from, and so on and on. The phrases "Man, know thyself" and "Knowledge is power" are also featured prominently. There's even a song title borrowed from Nietzsche ("Beyond Good And Evil"). Clearly this is not an outfit that needs to take themselves any more seriously.

A sense of humour would be far more useful. Or rather, a little musical irreverence – enough at least to enable some thinking outside the box of familiar sounds and influences dipped into here (Coil, Throbbing Gristle, Discharge). The construction of too many pieces here lacks imagination. "In Defence" is typical, with its looped drum track, layered progressively with chugging industrial guitars and FX-heavy lead parts. "Turn To Light" is less dense but more pompous: an Ambient fog and irruptions of tympani obscuring the declaimed vocal. "White Waters" ekes out the embers of its distorted guitar chords to flirt with the droning Metal textures being used by groups such as Earth or Sunn O))) at the moment, but to far less compelling effect.

The set closes with some respite, as "The Longest Journey" shifts the sound palette away from the Metallic. A battery of drum machine and chattering handclaps overlaid with some stately-morose synth strings, it raises thoughts of Kraftwerk and the glacial textures of 80s electro.

OVE JOHANSSON
MUSIC FROM STENINGE
LJ CD

BY BRIAN MORTON

A major presence on the Swedish scene since the end of the 50s with Mwendo Dawa and his own projects, Johansson has released solo recordings before, most notably 1997's *In A Different World*, and an earlier unaccompanied set on his own LJ imprint. The difference this time is the combination of solo tenor playing, EWI (electronic wind instrument) and sound design. What might in other hands be banal and merely decorative emerges here as a powerful set of vividly logical improvised structures, each and every one of which appears to have its own distinctive rationale.

It's hard to pin down an obvious influence or illuminating similarities, but both in spirit and thanks to Johansson's light, crisp tone, the most convincing similarity is with Lee Konitz's endlessly exploratory freestyle. Konitz probably doesn't have the same patience or enthusiasm for electronics, but it's the setting that makes a track like "At Eleven" seem more than an abstract exercise in fast, narrow-register playing. The rhythms are staccato and unpredictable. The saxophone articulation sharp as a tack. With the exception of the penultimate track, the EWI – never the most biddable of 'Instruments' – isn't overused, just teasing enough to make you wish there were a little more of it.

As his students at Gothenburg would have told you, Johansson's appetite for new sounds, not just on the saxophone but throughout sonic culture, is undimmed with the passage of time. "Techno 4 Four" is a good example, and taken at a speed that would have most younger men cramped and gasping at half its duration. "Ballad Or 12", not coincidentally the most Konitz-like of

tracks, is actually a challenging line built over a plonking ground bass and unison electronic sounds Who or what the 12 is or are may not be the point, but while you ponder it, Johansson suddenly backgrounds the effects and constructs an achingly lovely solo that also recalls some of Stan Getz's freer passages.

There's a helpful pointer to Steninge – south west Sweden, opposite Copenhagen – on the liner map If this is the kind of stuff that passes there with any regularity, it should be an essential destination.

NIKAIDOH KAZUMI
NIKA US TOUR 2003
MAP 2XCD + DVD

BY MIA CLARKE

With the exception of her stunning track "Temperature Of Windowside", which featured on Chapter's compilation *Songs For Nao: Fourteen Bands From Japan*, the intense range and bright dynamic of lo-fi artist Nikaidoh Kazumi's vocals have always come across better live than on studio recordings So the release of this beautifully presented three disc box set, which includes a 13 track selection taken from her live shows throughout the US during 2003, should be of particular interest to fans of Kazumi's two previous albums, *Mata Dtoshimasitayo* and *Tane 1*.

The first disc, a DVD directed by Manko Asai, documents Kazumi's tour of the West Coast with Phil Elvrum of Mt Eerie/Microphones.
Asai delightfully captures the spirit of being on the road without resorting to endless streams of glowing cat's eyes and shots of roadside diners. Kazumi's performances are especially moving, and provide a useful visual accompaniment to the audio discs Some of the more intimate scenes however, such as a family dinner at Elvrum's home, are of more limited appeal.

One of the strongest scenes in Asai's hour-long documentary shows Kazumi arriving at Calvin Johnson's Dub Narcotic Studio in Olympia, Washington, a week after the tour has begun Drawn to the piano dominating the central room, Kazumi walks over to it and begins to play The second disc in this set includes a 12 song collection of improvised material recorded at Dub Narcotic, on which Elvrum contributes drums, guitar, and trombone. It contains some excellent moments, as Elvrum's free jazz style on "Drums" complements Kazumi's Improv vocal exercises as they dip and tumble through the rhythms, with nice, atmospheric details such as Kazumi walking away from the mic as the song ends, and picking up a clattering pair of bells to begin the following track.

The real catch of this set, however, is the live disc It includes a handful of covers taken from fellow Japanese artists such as Jun Kamoda and Illreme, as well as previously unrecorded tracks Here, Kazumi's voice is incredible – confident despite its often childlike and impulsive inflections, and playful even when sudden aggressive edges slice through the relentless array of throaty clicks, whistles and swirling soprano Kazumi has been compared to Bjork in the past, and although both artists have similarly flexible vocal ranges and expressive timbres, Kazumi appears to borrow just as much from Bulganan folk singers and the intonation patterns of traditional Japanese melodies.

KTU
8 ARMED MONKEY
THIRSTY EAR CD

BY KEITH MOLINE

In general, it is best to avoid any musician dubbed "the Hendrix of" their instrument. They usually turn out to be men with cheesy grins and dubious haircuts, dressed in crushed velvet, playing flashy solos on inappropriate instruments fed through expensive FX presets In this case, however, the instrumentalist in question is Finnish accordion virtuoso Kimmo Pohjonen, a player who can genuinely claim to be extending the range of his instrument both technically and technologically, and who has proved his worth as a composer and improvisor of real originality on albums like 1999's *Kielo*. He is supported here by an ensemble that includes the duo of Pat Mastellotto on acoustic and electronic drums, and Trey Gunn, the Warr Guitar maestro (it's a relative of the Chapman Stick, since you ask). These two are best known as the rhythm section behind the current version of Prog heavyweights King Crimson.

In fact, while Pohjonen is clearly the star of *8 Armed Monkey*, the album is a close stylistic relative of the duo's 2003 release *Tu*, which beefed up the lunging polyrhythmic momentum of Crimson and added layers of loops, samples and knife-edge improvised interplay. Also featured here is samplist Samuli Kosminen, whose role seems to be to ensure that any remaining space in the music – of which, believe me, there is precious little – is crammed full of sound.

The result is dense, angular and exhausting Prog/Improv, tremendously impressive on first listen, but difficult to live with subsequently "Absinthe" typifies the album. Everything about it is awesome Its bludgeoning Magma-style bassline, its odd-metre riffology from Pohjonen's massive accordion are awesome. Gunn's solo, recalling Pat Metheny on *Song X*, is awesome Mastellotto's overlapping bell patterns are awesome But in the silence that follows, as you stare slack-jawed at your speakers and you find yourself marvelling "Awesome!" In moronic wonder, you'll understand the damage that's been done.

CHRISTINA KUBISCH
ARMONICA
SEMISHIGURE CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

As a co-signatory of America's Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin's place in history is secure But that's not the sum of his achievements. He also dabbled in science, trying, for example, to determine whether it was possible to harness the power of electrical storms. And when he wasn't doing politics or science, he was a keen amateur musician But although Franklin played violin, viola da gamba, harp and guitar, his musical interests and curiosity weren't satisfied. So, in 1761 he invented the glass harmonica (or 'armonica'). "Of all my inventions," he wrote, "the glass armonica has given me the greatest personal satisfaction."

The instrument consists of a wooden chest (a resonator) into which chromatically graded glass bowls, threaded onto a horizontal iron rod and separated by cork washers, are stacked It's played by working a foot treadle to set the bowls spinning, wetting one's fingers and touching them to the edge of the discs until friction creates a resonance The armonica's haunting, ethereal sounds were thought to approximate the music of the spheres, a divine harmony It's also said that Beethoven played the instrument so often that the high lead content of the glass poisoned him and contributed to his deafness, though Mozart also played and composed for it without apparent ill effect. The armonica produces long, lightly fluctuating tones with gradual attack and a considerable decay. Given those specifications, it's a pity that Morton Feldman never composed for the instrument, but thankfully Christina Kubisch has

Armonica is the concluding part of a tripartite project, all of which have been issued on CD by Semishigure. What's true of all CDs in the series is that Kubisch's structuring principle and raison d'être are hard to fathom. *Diapason* (2002), a composition for tuning forks, was followed by *Twelve Signals* (2004), for mining bells In both cases, Kubisch seems not to have tried to create a music per se out of these sources, she merely assembled the sounds in an interesting way By comparison, *Armonica* hews nearer to a standard expectation of music The armonica's tones glide over and under one another, thickening and thinning the music, sometimes producing harmonic material of great complexity. An occasional dissonance peppers the sweetness, and at unpredictable intervals the music drifts into silence before starting up again.

The armonica was recorded at Berlin's Musikinstrumenten-Museum in 1994. A decade later Kubisch reworked the material at the electronic studio of the Berlin Technical University Because the recessed sounds of the treadle mechanism overlap and create irregular rhythmic play, it's apparent that the piece has been multitracked in the studio. The CD comes with a 12 page booklet containing sombre but beautiful monochromatic photographs of one of Kubisch's sound installations, though the relationship between image and sound isn't made clear Kubisch doesn't fall into the trap of explanation, a bugbear of most sound art work The onus is on you to make of it what you will.

STEVE LEHMAN
DEMIAN THE POSTHUMAN
PI CD

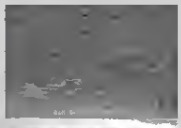
BY BRIAN MORTON

The best way to appreciate this is to bend your head beside Lehman's and look into the deceptive surfaces and depths of the black mirror. Like Hesse's eponymous hero, Lehman is making his own spiritual and creative journey without succumbing to dogma or style. The posthuman element comes with the effects and sequencing that enriches these duets (mostly) with drummer Tyshawn Sorey.

There are other sides to Lehman, as his playing with Fieldwork and Artificial Light demonstrates, and the record actually begins with a group track featuring Vijay Iyer on piano, Meshell Ndegeocello on bass, Eric McPherson on drums and Jahi Lake on turntables. There's nothing slight or gassy about "Vapors", though, and what's impressive here is the absolute consistency of purpose that runs through the record. That's made evident when "Logic" is

Nels Cline/Wally Shoup/ Chris Corsano
Immolation/Immersion CD
(SAAH039)

Immolation/Immersion is the inaugural recording of what will hopefully be more blasts of fury and filigree by three leading lights of improvised music - guitarist **Nels Cline**, saxophonist **Wally Shoup**, and young percussionist **Chris Corsano** As hinted by the title, *Immolation/Immersion* is compellingly dynamic, capturing a full range of destructive force and quiet submersion
"Welcome to these motherfuckers' world"
– *The Stranger*



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(SAAH038)

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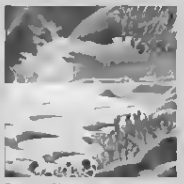

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(SAAH037)

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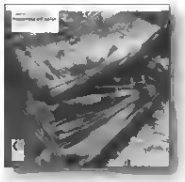

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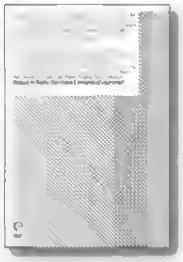

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played in two versions, one with the central cell played by Ndegeocello, the other (a duo) where it's taken by Lehman's alto.

In a similar way, "Damage Mobility" is heard first in an acoustic version for overdubbed solo saxophone without sequencing, before a fuller version with drums and electronics. In the first, sparer cut, Lehman seems to adapt his saxophone in some way, playing in curious non-idiomatic tones that give the impression of a small brass choir.

There's a clear but non-obvious process behind the four versions of "Cognition", to each of which is appended a name: Curtis Duncan, Drew Hill, Ernest Givens, Haywood Jeffires. They're all American football players, former wide receivers with the Houston Oilers, as good a sign as any that Lehman isn't some pointy-headed adherent of the New Complexity in jazz, and nor does he live his creative life with his head up Herman Hesse's ass. The groove-driven tracks with the underrated Ndegeocello are as funky as anything you'll have heard this year under a jazz banner and the final one, significantly titled "Community", clinches Lehman's commitment to a wider circle of activity than a wholly solo project might have suggested.

The opaque eyes on his liner photo give Lehman a disturbingly posthuman cast of his own. This is maybe how you look when you bend over the black mirror, but it's also a guy who quite enjoys being scary, and who maybe spent so much time watching the Oilers back in 1991 that the whites have disappeared.

AL MARGOLIS/IF, BWANA
REX XHU PING
POGUS CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Al Margolis runs the admirable Pogus label and since the mid-1980s he has made intriguing and diverse music under the name If, Bwana. *Rex Xhu Ping* presents six compositions made with various means but all share the feel of intuitive, hands-on making. "Natraj" combines a pounding resonant beat with the sizzle of radio waves. "Frog Field" overlaps mellow xylophone loops to refresh that amphibian chirping so familiar from stock found sound pieces. Other tracks locate spoken phrases within electronically generated and processed environments, instrumentally embellished. Textual shape and vocal character add flecking and fibre to the mix. "Cicada #5" is especially pleasing – a trio of Margolis, Dan and Detta Andreana sampling collage tapes of Adam Bohman talking across a range of subjects, pasted scraps from an idiosyncratic audio journal.

For "Oy Vey, Angie", Margolis convened the Orchestra O'Fou at Deep Listening Space in Kingston, New York. This is a "de/reconstructed" version of that performance, diffusing the distinctiveness of accordion, organ, trombone, cello, synthesizers and other instruments into sonic fragments projected through a cavernous tunnel of otherworldly drone. What animates all this music is palpable curiosity. Margolis tries out combinations of elements and finds what works. The materials never seem to have been subordinated to ideas or abstract principles but are energised from a circuit of active inquisitiveness, and that engagement transmits.

SHAWN DAVID MCMILLEN
CATFISH
EMPEROR JONES LP

BY JON DALE

Shawn David McMillen is one of many under-acknowledged presences from a Texan psychedelic music scene most notable for spawning Charalambides. McMillen has crossed paths with several members of said outfit, forming Ash Castles On The Ghost Coast with Heather Leigh Murray (now of Taurpis Tula) and playing in The Friday Group with Tom Carter, he is also a member of Rubble and Iron Kite. *Catfish* is McMillen's debut solo album and it shares the peculiar sense of temporal suspension and topographical resonance that exemplifies the soporific, glazed music created by artists from Texas. Though their music references psychedelia (a notionally 'placeless' aesthetic), there is something very specific about the manifestations of place and space in Texan psych.

Pieces like "Noon" and "The Lawn" are easy to pin down, with McMillen gingerly strumming curving folk phrases from his acoustic guitar, shading in nighttime detail with percussion and electronics. McMillen lets bowed bells ring out over the filigree melancholy of "The Lawn", while on "Old Bullets" he scratches high tones from an old autoharp and slowly disassembles the guitar's tonality with the help of a sloppy slide. The extended "Quintanna's Head Dress" is the highlight of the record. The beatific grace of the opening moments recalls ritual movement, unravelling all kinds of clattering sound sources before resolving to an elegant drone. *Catfish*'s foggy otherness recalls the blasted contents of unravelled private press documents or the extended sprawls found on 1990s underground titles from labels like Majora.

MI & L'AU
MI & L'AU
YOUNG GOD CD

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

If a tree falls in a forest and no one hears it fall, does it make a sound? One is put in mind of this conundrum by the bare and stark songs of Mi & L'au. The pair live in total isolation in a forest in Finland, having retreated there from Paris, where they met and fell in love. These songs were crafted with only themselves as a possible and intended audience. This is the soft, sweet voice of hermetically bonded love's self-sufficiency and solipsism. Michael Gira transported them to Brooklyn to record this album, but his production still captures the fragility of their arboreal retreat despite being executed in a concrete jungle.

Although Mi & L'au have found sanctuary in each other, many of the songs express doubts and confusions about the world they have left behind. On "How", Mi sings about *"When I feel empty"*, while the desolate echo of a high piano note punctuates a slow, painful march of doubt and introspection. L'au leads "Merry Go Round", a limping song of regrets lost in the bottom of a glass. *"Here's a bottle of wine,"* he sighs, an echoing single note electric guitar riff haunting the song and the merry-go-round of his memories.

Lighter and prettier moments are found with "They Marry", a pageant of slow motion carousel swirls and pizzicato arpeggios, the story of love's head over heels tumbles. Comparisons to Nick Drake are inevitable and "I've Been Watching You" has the fingerpicking and campfire timbre of Drake's Tanworth-In-Arden tapes. Not all the arrangements are stripped down. L'au has a background in soundtracks and lush orchestrations swell the tender "A Word In Your Belly" and gentle "Older" among others. In all cases, though, it is the sense of perfect independence and strength of purpose in the voices of Mi & L'au that makes these songs so tender yet so tough.

MIMINOKOTO
GREEN MANSIONS
ALCHEMY CD

BY JON DALE

Miminokoto are one of the most consistently hardwired outfits in Japan's psychedelic underground. Their songs, written by guitarist and vocalist Masami Kawaguchi (ex-Aihiyo and Broomdusters), are luminescent things, and the trio occasionally pushes them into stellar orbit through overdriven playing. Although many Japanese groups let their songs dissolve into all-out jamming, Miminokoto win out due to the comparatively restricted parameters that Kawaguchi inscribes for the other players (Koji Shimura on drums and new member Hiroaki Takeuchi on bass). Their songs may appear languid on the surface, as they sometimes stroll with a leisurely elegance that recalls Velvet Underground or Galaxie 500, but a forbidding tension buzzes under the wires. These songs have a will to explode that the group members struggle to keep in check.

Kawaguchi's guitar has a trebly, diamond-cut clarity and his voice moves between quivers and moans, sounding as though he is gasping, searching for a life-force that was once thought spent. When Miminokoto rock in an overt manner, as on "Next" and the scrawling guitar solo that penetrates "Triple Time", they come on like a perfectly rendered abstract garage gang. However, it's the more extended, wilting songs on *Green Mansions* that stand out. "Respective" pushes Kawaguchi's song form out of bounds, stretching its entrails across land and sea, while the opening "Echo" is a 15 minute epic for lagging lids, with Kawaguchi scaring a skyscraping solo from the depths of the song's abyss. Kawaguchi's songs share an elusive quality – they are made intangible by their inability to summon up exacting emotional responses. Miminokoto's spectral ambivalence is all.

MINSK
OUT OF A CENTER WHICH IS NEITHER DEAD NOR ALIVE
AT A LOSS CD

BY PHIL FREEMAN

All Metal is mood music, but a new mood is now being soundtracked. Many groups have recently begun to eschew rage, discovering in its place the pleasures of slowness, of grace and a morose, manly psychedelia. Neurosis and Isis are the two most commonly cited forefathers of this blossoming subgenre, but Minsk and other second-generation slow-throb acts are moving the torch a good distance down the road. What's most striking about this music is how adeptly it subverts or sidesteps Metal's traditional insistence on catharsis.

It's New Age music of a sort: it fills the room and it's often quite beautiful, but its ebb and flow are so regular and smooth that it acts as a sedative rather than a stimulant. The drums don't crash explosively, or batter the music forward — they maintain a steady rhythm that's not fast enough to move an audience, but not slow enough to put them entirely to sleep, either. The guitars advance and recede like the tides, roaring and downtuned but, because of the near-total absence of blues, never truly 'heavy' in the Sabbathian sense. (Go back and re-hear just how swinging a rhythm section Bill Ward and Geezer Butler really were.) Moreover, the vocals are indecipherable yet essentially melancholy, like a caveman racked by howling sobs. Even a guest appearance by Yakuza saxophonist Bruce Lamont on the album's final track can't totally blow the mists away. Minsk are happier being stately and beautiful — always in a chest-beating way, of course — than headbanging, or inspiring headbanging in others.

GORDON MUMMA
ELECTRONIC MUSIC OF THEATRE AND PUBLIC ACTIVITY
NEW WORLD CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

No film footage apparently survives to document the visual element of Gordon Mumma's *Megaton For Wm Burroughs*, which featured five performers spread out across the performance space communicating with each other using aircraft headsets while dangerous-looking metal objects whizzed past overhead on high wires. However, Mumma's terrifying electroacoustic sound sculpture still packs a mighty punch 41 years after its premiere at Ann Arbor Michigan's legendary ONCE festival. The texture gradually thins out, only to be swallowed up in a roar of Lancaster bombers and dialogue culled from the soundtrack to Michael Anderson's 1954 war film *The Dambusters*, but Mumma pulls the faders down brutally just when Eric Coates's *Dambusters March* comes sailing in, to leave a lone jazz drummer "quietly riding his traps". It's an enigmatic ending to a groundbreaking work of American experimental music.

However, the three works that join it on this splendid disc are worthy companions, and their appearance on disc for the first time is cause for celebration. *Conspiracy 8*, whose textual content refers to the trial of seven radicals accused of conspiring to incite a riot at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, uses a network of live performers interacting in real time with a PDP-6 computer in what Mumma describes as a "theatre of communication under hazardous conditions". The composer's use of a digitally mauled musical saw provokes much hilarity from the public at MIT's Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, where this premiere was recorded on 20 February 1970. *Cybersonic Cantilevers* derives from a interactive installation in May 1973 at the Everson Museum in Syracuse, NY, in which visitors were invited to contribute sounds (including the inevitable blasts of rock and pop as well as extracts from radio broadcasts and other extraneous sounds), which Mumma and his performers processed and fed back into the performance space. Compared to today's portable wizardry, Mumma's cybersonic gear looks as quaint and clunky as an old *Doctor Who* episode, but the sounds he generates with it are truly compelling and uncompromising. Nor is a sense of humour lacking: the disc ends with a quick blast of circus hilarity with 1980's *Cirqualz* — from Beethoven's *Eroica* to a fatal car smash in just 5'43".

NEPTUNE
3" CD
MAGNETISM CRAFTS CD

BY MIA CLARKE

Neptune, who are based in Jamaica Plain, Boston, began life as the sculpture project of singer/guitarist Jason Sanford. Though they have had a degree of success touring mainland Europe, Neptune are predominantly known within the perimeter of Massachusetts's underground music scene, where they frequently self-release limited edition runs of live recordings with individually personalised covers.

Utilising remnants of scrap metal such as rusted saw blades and bottle tops, warped bicycle tyres and abandoned gasoline barrels, Sanford originally soldered the monstrous looking guitars and complex circuit boards that provide the backbone to Neptune's distinctive, abrasive and largely instrumental style of Industrial hardcore. Alongside bassist Mark Pearson and drummer Daniel Boucher, he creates a tumultuous blend of detailed, mathematically precise rhythms punctuated with gusts of white noise and the capricious electronics of Pearson's handmade synth and oscillator 'boxes' — small metal contraptions that are attacked with drumsticks and iron tubes to detonate a stream of arbitrary harmonics amid the group's thickly discordant fug.

As with their impressive live shows, Neptune's recordings largely consist of improvisational segments interspersed with more structurally complete songs. *3" CD*, the group's 14th release, contains three studio recordings and two of Pearson's solo improvisations. The odd timbre and dynamic of the group's instruments translates fluently to the studio: the stinging clarity of Sanford's guitar, as it responds to the muscular drawl of bass on "The Late Worm", is a particularly fine example of Neptune's ability to generate unpredictable dialogues between instruments. "Donkeyskin", a fierce, sprawling anti-ballad that originally featured on the group's 2004 album *Intimate Lightning*, shows how they have developed since their early releases, characteristically managing to be both remarkably complex and wilfully imprecise.

3" CD is a good starting point for those unfamiliar with the group's work. The two improvised tracks that close the disc are effective indications of the limitless potential lying in the trio's seemingly destructive methods, and are littered with unusual tones that shift, split apart, and fan out.

OPERETTAMORALE
BLACK SUN PRODUCTIONS
DIVINE FREQUENCY CD

BY SAM DAVIES

The lyrics of Bertolt Brecht, usually in collaboration with composer/arranger Kurt Weill, have been interpreted and reinterpreted endlessly over the last 50 years by, among others, Tom Waits, David Bowie, Dave Van Ronk, The Young Gods and The Doors. This *Black Sun Productions* project, intended as a tribute to Brecht's poetry, takes an approach that emphasises the personal over the slavishly precise. The core contributors, Massimo and Pierce, are not only celebrating Brecht's work in and of itself, but using it to reflect on their own relationship and their experiences of prostitution.

Lydia Lunch, Coil, HR Giger and Fabrizio Modonese also contribute to this collectivist set. Modonese's opener, "Brothel Tango", all bows dragging stickily over cello strings, is probably the strongest track — which, given that it's an instrumental on an album of lyric tributes, is a little ironic. Lunch's spoken word on "The Ballad Of Sexual Dependency" is typically mordant. Coil's track "A List Of Wishes" sees Jhonn Balance (to whom the album is posthumously dedicated) reinterpret a Brecht poem over a distant, burbling loop. It rather shows up "La Canzone Dei Pendagli Da Forca", the preceding track — the dull croaking of crows is a pretty tired signifier of dread and gloom. "Ballade Von Der Höllenlilli" is more successful, with its absurdist confection of easy listening instrumentation and Pierce's deadpan monotone vocal.

This project makes you wonder what subversive strategies Brecht would be investigating if at work today. Probably something more acute, more telling than posing, as Massimo and Pierce do, in leather trenchcoats, knee-high boots and nothing else. But if *operretAmorale* leads new readers to Brecht's work then so much the better.

HENRI POUSSEUR & MICHEL BUTOR
PAYSAGES PLANÉTAIRES
ALGA MARGHEN 3XCD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Belgian composer Henri Pousseur was an important, if undervalued, part of the 1950s scene surrounding the Darmstadt composers. He was often talked about in the same company as Stockhausen, Boulez and Berio, but in 1960 hit a creative crisis about his future direction. Pousseur emerged from this block with a more independent mind, determined to create scores reflecting the entire history of music, including rock and jazz. But his reputation has never quite recovered from such a public rebellion against purist modernism.

Paysages Planétaires is a huge slab of electronica that Pousseur assembled in 2000. It had its starting point as an environmental piece for a new business complex in Brussels, designed by architect Phillippe Samyn. The shape of the centre had four buildings arranged around a central courtyard, which Pousseur then projected outwards as a symbol for the entire planet, dividing the space up into complex regional subdivisions based around north, south, east and west. Into these sectors Pousseur pours an overload of environmental noise ("sea, fire, city, swamp, industry, forest", he writes) and superimposes ethnomusical examples of indigenous sounds from the regions. The result is like an aural Web page, with new sounds constantly downloading themselves into your ears.

Pousseur's work follows a lineage from Stockhausen's *Hymnen* to Cage's *Roaratorio* in using materials rich with regional association to fashion an abstract sound sculpture. The

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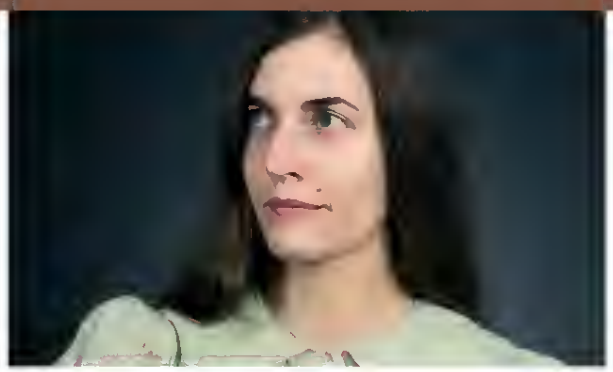

Ode to Joy: Josephine Foster

Josephine Foster seems to have made her way down to Australia, which is good news because it means that there's a cool tour EP to commemorate it. *Joy Will Come If You Invite Her* (Art School Dropout 7") has six tunes in the patented Josephine style – as naked as Tiny Tim at his nudest, but with Ms Foster's distinctly out-of-time vocals in place of Mr Khoury's. Accompanied by her own varietal strings, the songs here have the odd glow of parlour songs performed on Venus. Into your spaceships, children.

Two UK groups, **Angela Void** and **Ashbourne's Strongest Man**, share a snappy split single (World in Winter 7"). AV offer a semi-abstract instrumental somewhat in the vein of the lighter moments of American freak-rockers, pulsing sideways into brightly lit hallways with noticeably druggy footsteps. ASB's track is also an instrumental, but it's fronted with a folky guitar, riffing against nice, psych-tinged softness. It's a good one to listen to as the snow falls in the darkness outside.

Descended from the Austrian trio Das Fax Mattinger, a new outfit called **Barbarella Plusch** has a very nice new single in *d_b/Mono* (Klang Galene 7"). Jazzily rolled drums plus e-bowed guitar and bass create a quiet instrumental space. As with many Midwestern Americans with similar compositional notions, the music here seems to be a bit more about the texture of the journey than the excitement of the destination, but a travelogue of this sort actually works best in short form.

Dr Drek is Schneider TM, which is one of the names that Stephen Schneider uses for his work done outside To Rococo Rot's shadow. Anyway, Drek has a new one called *More Time/Rush Moon* (Earsugar Jukebox 7") that's hideously catchy. "More Time" combines one sampled vocal snatch with very swank analogue gushing an extremely pleasant mock-guitar in a way that *really* makes it seep into your brain. More TRR fallout is available on the new **Mapstation** single, *Vain/Vacant* (Earsugar Jukebox 7"). Another of Schneider's operating aliases, Mapstation's new plug track is an appealingly listless mix of digital pus seepage. Its partner has many more duppy little analogue jump-motions, making it sound more like the plug track, but then, what the heck? On Earsugar Jukebox, the artist alone will decide.

Harshest noise award for my particular month must go to the untitled single by Slovakia's **Einleitungszeit** (Klang Galene 7"). Amid sheets of metal being pressed together by bulldozers, we can make out the sound of rotten robots screaming their last screams as acid dribbles onto them from a hole in the warehouse roof. It's a banging, crashing pile of old school noise that's guaranteed to make your parakeet sit up and ask for more crackers.

The Feather Gatherers are an ad hoc UK duo with Jonathan Marshall of Deerpark joining the superb new-volk multi-tasker, Sharon Krauss. *Leaves/Tower At Bollingen* (Singing Knives 7") has two songs that are as swank a pairing of contemporary acoustic sadnesses as you'll find in a month of Mondays. "Leaves" features both vocalists and the blend of their voices is like biting into the best pickle you ever ate. "Tower" is a feature for Marshall's voice and Krauss's flute, and it's another sparse haunter. File near Iron & Wine and play often.

Pawel Grabowski is associated with Poland's excellent Dbuh Records scene, but his new single, *Cirr's Song* (Drone 7"), doesn't have the deep woods ambience one generally thinks of when Dbuh is the topic. This solo outing is based on a dream that Pawel had of drowning, and all I can say is that it's a hell of a long way down. Some of parts have a quivery edge, reminiscent of sonar pulses in old submarine movies, and there are also parts that sound like water being disrupted by a variety of different things. Hard to imagine holding your breath for the entire length of this, but perhaps some of our stronger and younger readers would be game to give it a try. Also submarine in its operational approach is **Tzesne**'s "Huffpuff" (Drone 7"). This Spanish artist assembled the sounds on his first vinyl from real and/or imagined underwater transmissions from the Second World War, but the feeling of the music is much more expansive than that would seem to infer. The ocean presented here shimmers with the promise of something other than depth charges.

Most of the extended tone work you hear these days tends to have a touch of the ethereal about it. That is definitely not true of *Ether Ride/Crucible* (Drone 7") by **Hum**. This Russian assemblage, previously known only through cassettes and CD-Rs, makes a pretty damn forceful vinyl debut with this one. The A side has a very aggressive textural backdrop and makes me think of the kind of music that wolves might listen to, if you gave them a choice. The flip is a bit more loop based and not quite as damaged, but the way that the waves of insect paranoia flow through your head while it plays, is fetching. Also from Russia, **Cisfinitum**'s new *VS* (Drone 7") is even more savage – a pummelling blend of screams and metal bwams that really sounds splendid at high volume. It is also packed inside its own woollen protective gear, which is a really good idea now that winter is upon us.

Because someone must have demanded it, we now have a reissue of Felix Kubin's *Antarktis Slow Rock* (Meeuw Muzak 7") with a new mix of the B side, "Shakin' Tundra". The A side still sounds like woozy spy club organ poop with skittle beats and glandy spikes of bits of butt-bleep woven in. The flip still blips with a sort of hideous majesty, but I'll be damned if I can put my fingers on the original right now for comparison.

Hmm... *Chicken EP* (Distraction 7") by **Mushi Mushi** looked like it was going to be another electro-snooze device, but it's actually very charming and sputzy in its way. I mean, yeah, they are an electro duo and all, but they have a non-beatoid aggression that makes their splices work like slashes in a darkened room. They really attack the idea of construction in a way that is terminally punk without being stupid. Indeed they scrambled the stuff like kitchen magicians, and their samples sound so live you'll swear it's an illusion. Hip. The same could be said for **DJ Scotch Egg**'s *Scotch Chicken/Scotch Party* (Raw Music 7"), which seems to have originated in his obsession with KFC. Hardcore Gameboy roistering doesn't get much better than this. It will make your teeth spin around in your gums, which is a good effect almost any time.

Neung Phak is an alter ego of Mono Pause, an art combo from Oakland, California, with ties to Negativland. But NP's sound is a pretty specific Asian goon pastiche. *Fucking USA* (Abduction 7") also (supposedly) features The Sun City Girls' Alan Bishop somewhere in the mix, and one doesn't doubt it. The three songs here are a screwy selection – from Asian readymade pop gush to devolving spit glob keyboard wobble, to an anti-American rave-up that probably works better on a sentimental level than it does on an aesthetic one.

Swedish quartet **Dhm**, have a look that makes them seem like they'll be pure sludge, but that may not be the exact actual case. Their debut EP *The Blackriver* (Release The Bats 7") does indeed have some classic guitar choogle moves on it, but the keyboard shrugs in a very contempo manner and it brings to mind the vibe of some of the modern groups that got released by reissue labels back in the day. It's tempting at times to say that they sound almost Norwegian, but that'd be missing the point.

Wearside septet **Seventy Three** are apt enough at reinventing and modernising ur-disco grunt on their debut single, *Team Spirit/My-Baby-By Me* (Bunkerock 7"), but the chunky guitar is hardly enough to get me charging the bathroom for a litre of amyl nitrate or anything. I can only guess that either my trousers have grown too tight during the holiday eating season or my angina is getting the best of me. What a square.

Although the new tour single by **Sightings**, *Castle Moat/Invisible Coats* (Fusetron 7"), clearly states that it plays at 45 rpm, it's actually supposed to play at 33. So beware. That said, this Brooklyn combo sounds quite mighty at either speed, although the way they crack things apart is a lot more apparent at the slower pace. Combining that classicist P-Galore vocal jabber with guttural instrumental splange, Sightings pretty much eviscerate the basement continuum by cutting, chopping and channelling every inch of sound that doesn't carry the special weight of their disease. Nice move.

Smooth Quality Excrement (aka SQE) used to be a group effort, but it seems as though this new single, *Wahid/Epitaph 3* (Drone 7"), is the solo work of J Greco. Regardless, this little record is a beautiful breath of mysterious moisture. The A side fondles the air with a very gentle droning – flutey at times, Eastern-tinged throughout, almost like a slice of one of the really good records on Silence or something. The flip is a somewhat more spaced sounding construction with backwards cymbals slooting out into the atmosphere like toads from the lips of a pod door. It's a very cool thing to listen to while your partner slowly loads the bong and fills the bathtub.

It doesn't seem to me that you can really have four groups on a 'split single', at least in the classic use of the term. But the label claims that this nameless release by **Tan As Fuck**, **Ground Monkeys**, **Mouthus** and **Dosdedos** (Heat Retention 7") is just that, so who are we to argue? Tan As Fuck diddle around the edges of Euro freedom with their feet firmly placed on banana peels. Ground Monkeys do a nice and chimey concrete-claustrophobia number. Mouthus have a true handle on two-man free-rock splat-action emitting as much shriek as drum. Dosdedos do the kind of free jazz mimetic dance more frequently heard on the Old Gold label, but they add crazed female vocals to good effect. There you go – four fine acts? Sure. But split single? I'm not so sure.

English/Norwegian electro duo **Toy** have a new single, *Sedan Through Tunnel/Decorama* (Smalltown Supersound 7") that has such a tipsy plip-plop swing to it that it could easily be the soundtrack to a slideshow of wallpaper samples. It's the kind of single that makes you long for a doughnut and a day long ride in an elevator. Which may or may not be a sensation you crave.

On their new split single (5RC 7"), **Xiu Xiu** and **Devendra Banhart** do one of the oldest jack-flaps in the split single biz by covering each other's songs. About Xiu Xiu I have nothing to say. However, Devendra's track, "Support Our Troops! OH!", takes a spoken word piece and turns it into a finely nutty one man barbershop howl. Which proves that old tricks aren't necessarily tired – they can be vintage as hell in the right hands. Which Mr DB certainly has. □

Reviewed by Byron Coley

difference with Pousseur's vision is that his source materials are allowed to be nakedly explicit – melismatic Eastern folk musics and bursts of Dixieland jazz appear from nowhere, then abruptly disappear back into the texture. Pousseur's structures are liberating and loose, without feeling his ear is governed too rigidly by grand schemata. A final layer of comment is added by poet Michel Butor, whose reflections on Pousseur's music are included in the lavishly produced booklet. In performance, Pousseur suggests these texts should be read out alongside the music. But at over three and a half hours of complex multilayered sounds, listeners to this set already have more than enough to occupy them.

THE PRIMETIME SUBLIME COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA
SONGS THAT WILL NEVER WIN A GRAMMY
CORPORATE BLOB CD

BY SAM DAVIES

This is a release trying to go in a hundred directions at once without getting too far in any of them. Nominally a community orchestra, on closer inspection it is the work of a single self-styled 'impresario', Paul Minotto, who writes, performs, records and produces. It might denounce the musical mainstream, but at the same time it cannot resist plundering it constantly for its unruly pastiches of genre. And in among this musical bricolage is an obsession with the political mainstream, with George W Bush cast in the dual roles of village idiot and pantomime villain.

"Curb Your God", for example, sets about the alliance of political and religious rightwingers with Zappa-esque scatological riffing, the pun being on the American street signs urging people to curb their dogs. *"God poop"*, The Orchestra argues, is a serious public health hazard. Zappa also comes to mind during "I Want You" and "Betty Poptarts". Each mixes an obvious fondness for the sugary hit of pop hooks with the itchy impatience of the channel-hopper. "I Want You" interrupts itself with an outbreak of sax and jazz drumming, "Betty Poptarts" with a long interlude of vocal samples forming an absurdist Q&A.

The Orchestra often fall between the many stools of genre into an unclassifiable soundworld similar to that of The Residents. Both are drawn to mimic the curious condition of jingles or Muzak, music made for purely commercial reasons, yet at the same time culturally invisible – or rather, inaudible. The goofy mimetic touches of "Dance Of The Bouncing Hornballs" is typical. Imagine a recalcitrant Anton Webern composing for Hanna-Barbera on the shortest of deadlines. The Residents have certainly influenced The Orchestra's vocals, all of which are rendered into denatured gurgles or burbles through various filters or vocoders. The overall effect is of eavesdropping on the internal dialogue of a musical outsider trying to work through a love/hate relationship with a mainstream oblivious to his existence.

STEVE REID ENSEMBLE
SPIRIT WALK
SOUL JAZZ CD

BY BRIAN MORTON

There's the Steve Reid who drummed for Supertramp and did some work with Miles Davis (allegedly), and there's this Steve Reid who played on Martha & The Vandellas' "Heatwave", worked with The Arkestra, knew Coltrane, and also did a stint with Miles Davis. Teamed up with Four Tet's Kieran Hebden and an extraordinary line-up that includes Tony Bevan on bass saxophone and John Edwards on bass, he's produced a record that at first blush seems to come out of the jazz-rock boom of the early 70s. That impression is cemented by Chuck Henderson's soprano sound, which wouldn't have been out of place on Joe Zawinul's self-titled Atlantic LP.

The set is heavy on saxophones – Bevan's heaviest of all, obviously – as befits a title like "For Coltrane", though that, perversely, is the one that sounds least retro and nostalgic in spirit. Reid is a musician who always looks forward – you can hear it in the insistent slant of his metres – but who recognises that just because a style was around 30 years ago, doesn't mean it's exhausted. The opening "Lugano" would be hard to date, even stripped of Hebden's curious whooshing, grating effects.

Quite what the basis of their collaboration is remains slightly unclear. Keyboard man Boris Netsvetaev provides, one would have thought, sufficient context, and yet it's Hebden's abstract/impressionistic backgrounds that make some of these tracks, particularly "Drum Story", a narrative of black rhythms with spoken commentary from the leader. A conscientious objector, who spent four years in the slammer rather than fight in Vietnam, Reid has more than earned the right to lecture us about war drums and peace drums, and Hebden does nothing to diminish the sheer emotional impact of the cut. A second collaborative album is apparently already in the can and set for release in the new year. It will make for fascinating listening.

The other two saxophonists – tenor players Neil Kleiner and Nathaniel Catchpole – don't make such an immediate or obvious impact, but their contribution is essential and the noise the whole ensemble makes on "Lions Of Judah", carved out over a funky backbeat and organ stabs, is extraordinary.

So just to be clear: this is the senior, non-mullet-wearing Steve Reid. Heed him well.

TERRY RILEY & ARTE QUARTETT
ASSASSIN REVERIE
NEW WORLD CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

In 1993, Rova Saxophone Quartet recorded Terry Riley's dramatic Celtic sequence *Chanting The Light Of Foresight* (New Albion), demonstrating how well subtly aligned saxophone timbres and quartet chording suited the character of his sinuous modal music. Now ARTE Quartett supply further evidence, performing three contrasting pieces. The oldest, *Tread On The Trail*, was composed in 1965, when Riley was 30 and had just written *In C*. This music has long been overshadowed by that defining minimalist work, although it surfaced pleasingly on saxophonist Jon Gibson's 1992 solo release *In Good Company* (Point) and it sounds equally good in this revised 12 saxophone version, with ARTE Quartett layered in triplicate. *Tread On The Trail* was initially dedicated to tenor colossus Sonny Rollins and this group rendition of its attractive melodic sets swings convincingly over a droning horn pulse.

Uncle Jard (1998) is in three movements with Riley augmenting the quartet on either piano or harpsichord. During the sultry first movement, Riley intones in the effective style he developed out of lessons with the great Indian singer Pandit Pran Nath. His jazz vocalising for the exuberant second section is rather less persuasive, sounding strained, mannered and in real need of Mose Allison's assistance. Part three is solely instrumental, an elegant and fluent filtering of jazz and raga influences into Riley's distinctive idiom.

Assassin Reverie (2001), scored for saxophone quartet and tape, is intended for performance in a specified theatrical context with lighting to match the musical action. An orderly canon structure builds soberly then breaks apart, releasing fierce, gritty improvising entangled with a hail of bullets, cries of anger and aggression and helicopter noise. The cacophony subsides into an elegiac aftermath. Riley's music has thankfully retained its edge and excitement, avoiding the lure of grandiosity and the numbing predictability to which some of his contemporaries, formerly of a minimalist persuasion, have fallen prey.

SAWAKO+
OMNIBUS
COMMUNITY LIBRARY CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

Distant car noises, flicking radio dials and, now and then, a snatch of melody given an absent minded performance are all sounds found on Sawako Kato's *Omnibus*, but their presence is very far from simply just the product of an attentiveness to chance detail. As the plus sign appended on this occasion to her name indicates, *Omnibus* is also the product of a Sawako enhanced by the collaboration of her friends and colleagues from the electroacoustic art scenes in Tokyo and New York. It's this that makes the album – if a ten track recording a shade under 20 minutes is an album – such an emotionally rich event. The small scufflings and infinitesimal sounds on the recording are also the sound of a particular community.

Whatever the randomness of her source recordings, Sawako does impose a certain compositional control over how she uses them. It can be difficult to evaluate how much – often the tracks are aural sketches of time passing, hovering ambient sounds of birdsong, far off voices and the like – but it is there, nevertheless.

And onto this, there appear new elements, often a vaguely rhythmic tingling (to call it a beat would be too precise) that notify us of our presence in what is, essentially, a historical artefact. There is also a large array of material here, from the clicks and music box riffs of "ORG" to the desolation conveyed by the attempted melody on "Pincry". The most fully realised track is "Lapon", a track that in another life may have been a disco number, but here is a little tune and woolly beat trying to escape and is, in its own weird way, rather lovely.

Interestingly, *Omnibus* is not a closed system, but a continuing project. A little note on the liner invites listeners to make their own remixes of the record and, "if they're nice", send them in to Sawako.

DAVID SHEA
THE BOOK OF SCENES
SUB ROSA CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Sampling composer David Shea has a large discography that stretches back to the 1980s. In recent months, since relocating to Australia, he has begun to reissue some of this material on Metta Editions, but his connection with the Belgian label Sub Rosa remains strong. *The Book Of Scenes* is, by my reckoning, the seventh CD of his music they've issued. The work was composed for the duo of Jean-Philippe Collard-Neven (piano) and Vincent Royer (viola), and it can be performed in duo accompanied by Shea's electronic tape or in trio with Shea playing sampler and live electronics. The CD contains a studio performance recorded by the trio in December 2004. The composition consists of 29 short 'scenes', each comprising a single page of material, that, individually and collectively, have a filmic quality. Each of the scenes has a distinct atmosphere and identity, partly due to Shea's varied electronic settings, but also because the musical relationships between the players are constantly shuffled to subvert expectation. Shuffling is entirely the point: Shea recommends using random play when you listen to this recording.

Over the years, his work has become less densely collaged, though the degree of information it conveys has, if anything, increased – it's just presented in a more subtle manner than hitherto. However, he still favours juxtapositions of sounds that are, at times, crudely surreal or cartoonish, employed as much for their ability to startle as for their musical merit. Examples of such can be heard on the micro-drama "Radio Weekend", which has a fragmented narrative into which much can be read, and "Exotique", which situates the duo amid a cod-jazz band arrangement that quickly exhausts itself in a flurry of excitable gestures before venturing into a series of playful false endings. Of course, as an audio collagist, structure is Shea's particular forte, and in that respect *The Book Of Scenes* is one of his strongest works to date. But the sophistication and maturity of his writing for viola and piano should not go unremarked. The dilemma for Shea is where next to take his music. One could argue that with *The Book Of Scenes*, he has pretty much exhausted the potential of the sampler. Perhaps that's a good thing. The composition suggests that there are many new possibilities open to him, using a much older technology.

SPUNK
EN ALDELES FORFERDELIG SYKDOM
RUNE GRAMMOFON CD

BY KEITH MOLINÉ

Named after Pippi Longstocking's favourite word – nothing to do with bodily fluids – Spunk are a Norwegian improv quartet who share their fictional heroine's feistiness and insistence on doing things a bit differently. The quartet are about to celebrate their tenth anniversary and have marked the occasion with this quite wonderful new album. Including musicians whose interests range from contemporary composition through pop, jazz and noise (singer and

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

London highlife ET Mensah (left)

The photos gracing ***London Is The Place For Me 2*** (Honest Jon's CD) series are almost as resonant as the music — the cover of this volume, subtitled *Calypso Kwela Highlife And Jazz From Young Black London*, has a portrait of a mixed race couple staring tentatively into the camera, unsure of whether the wider public will accept them. The music matches this more reflective mood. This is not calypso as stage entertainment, but more like players-only jams behind closed doors. The rhythms in the first volume could feel as awkward as a gawky teenager having his first ever dance and shot of rum in a Gerrard Street club, but here they are loose-limbed jazzy vamps, like "ET Mensah's Rolling Ball" by West African Swing Stars. Even Young Tiger's choice lyric is a skit about jazzbos — *"They call a man a cat and a girl a chick, and they up to all sorts of shitty tricks"*. Russ Henderson's "West Indian Drums" is startlingly similar to the afro-trance of Art Blakey circa *Roots And Herbs*, while Ambrose Campbell's "Ashiko Rhythm" recalls the boundless improvisations of Count Ossie's Mystic Revelation Of Rastafari. As long as you can cope without the instant fix of calypso chat that the first volume offered, *London Is The Place For Me 2*'s deeper roots and pleasures are sure to take hold. *(DW)*

John Cage tossed coins to construct the dazzling *Music Of Changes*, while his *Imaginary Landscape No 4* turned over the burden of decision-making to 12 radio receivers, whose transmissions could not be predicted. CM Von Hausswolff's ***freq_out 2*** (Ash International CD) harks back to Cage's experiments: it likewise undermines the composer's authority by the use of chance, resorting to a particularly ingenious method. The spectrum of audible frequencies is divided up between a dozen or so participants, each of whom composes a piece, working within the range of frequencies allocated to him. The resulting compositions are then played simultaneously, eliminating the possibility of determining the final result and the very notion of the group.

The music on *freq_out 2* amply testifies to the creative possibilities of this technique. Recorded at the second freq_out event, held in Oslo in 2004 with a line-up including JG Thirlwell aka Foetus and Brandon LaBelle, it makes for a spellbinding experience. As the sounds interact and engage with each other, as if in an intricate ballet, there emerge long, loud moans, ghostly incantations, shimmering drones and murky undercurrents of noise. These drop seamlessly into place as the different compositions merge to form a single piece. As they do so, they point up the deeper significance of the freq_out project, whereby each frequency range symbolises a different territory and the final mix enacts the possibilities of collaboration between bordering countries. Hausswolff's concept is well served by the open-ended, all-embracing structures of contemporary electronica, in which sounds of all kinds mix and merge. In this respect, the fluid, swirling washes of sound pervading *freq_out 2* open up new and enlightening vistas. *(RK)*

One of Slovenia's most innovative labels collaborating with Serbia's Belgradeyard Sound System to put out a selection of recordings made at Belgrade's Dis-patch festival between 2002 and 2004? No way that isn't going to be interesting. Double negatives notwithstanding, the material contained on ***Dis_Patched*** (Rx Tx 2XCD) is more than worthy of your consideration. The emphasis of the festival is upon the live presentation of electronic music; and the distribution of performances between the two CDs reflects an appropriately diverse set of strategies and responses. The first disc grapples with the proposition that electronica is the new folk music, highlighting contributions from Tarwater, Tujiko Noriko, Colleen and Marc Marcovic, while the second disc probes the fuzzy edge of digital reality in the capable company of Rechenzentrum, AGF, Monolake and Aoki Takamasa. Either way, this collection takes you places you haven't been before. *(KH)*

In the light of Chris Bohn's reservations about the Sublime Frequencies' cut out and keep approach to field recording (*The Wire* 262), it's nice to see ***Guitars Of The Golden Triangle: Folk And Pop Music Of Myanmar Vol 2*** (Sublime Frequencies CD) provide a little more detail about the recorded personnel than usual. There are brief details about artists such as Saing Saing Maw, who apparently returned to truck driving after a dazzling, but brief, career in the 60s. These liner notes have a certain feeling of hearsay, however — traces of the 60s music from this landlocked area of Burma probably exist merely in oral tradition these days, which means in turn that any compilation of such elusive music must carry a heavy imprint of the compiler's own personality. As usual with Alan Bishop's label, it's all jumpy edits, interruptions and jagged segues, like a Wolfman Jack trash-rock radio show. It's incredible fun, although how much relation it bears to what happened in the 60s is a moot point. Sublime Frequencies talk of their music expressing an aesthetic of "extra-geography", and perhaps the thrill of cassette music culture such as that of Burma is that of music forming elusive, micro-relations rather than having a strictly locatable social function. One is tempted to fantasise about this music joyously emanating from every shop, bar and restaurant in 60s Myanmar — a vision which makes you want to throw away your iPod in disgust. *(DW)*

In August 2005, at the behest of the Australia Council, Sydney based guitarist Oren Ambarchi assembled ***Loose Canon: Sounds From The Australian Experimental Underground*** (Australia Council For The Arts 2XCD). Its 26 tracks are spread over two CDs, and each disc contains a bonus video of a live performance: the Hi-God People on disc one, Justice Yeldham on disc two. Ambarchi notes that the compilation comprises "just a fragment of the breadth and diversity of the Australian Experimental Underground". Some of these individuals and groups are fairly well known elsewhere in the world, most notably Pimmon, The Necks, Alan Lamb, Will Guthrie, Martin Ng, Robbie Avenaim and Ambarchi himself, whereas the music of others, including Brothers Of The Occult Sisterhood, Volvox, Thembi Soddell, Wog, Rev. Kriss Hades, Snawklor, Rod Cooper, Mayo, Brendan Walls and The Menstruation Sisters, hasn't travelled much beyond Australasia. Just over half of the tracks have previously been issued on CD, but Ambarchi's judicious re-contextualisation sheds a completely different light on them. Nearly everything here is of interest, in particular Avenaim's piece for junk kit and electronic percussion, "Impulse Control Disorder", the Stasis Duo track featuring acoustic guitar and empty sampler, Western Grey's "After Hours" and Brendan Walls's "Acacia Mearnsii" for self-regulating electronic and percussion system. None of these pieces has previously been issued on CD and all are very welcome. *(BM)*

Japanese noise vendor and activist Hitomi Arimoto has issued several cross-sectional documents of the international noise scene on his label Temple Of Be Saint 777. His compilation ***God Came Between Us*** (777 Was 666 CD) does something similar, with an added angle on the archaeology of noise and the fringes of psychedelia. While Dylan Nyoukis, another key node in the current noise network, appears as Decaer Pinga, there's a stronger emphasis on forerunners and antecedents — such as Destroy All Monsters, whose track here, "Heavy Metal Lagoon", re-edits early 70s source material into overlapping bursts and swells of sound, seesawing back and forth across the stereo field, as if desperate to elude anything that could be construed as stable or fixed. Silver Apples make an always welcome appearance with Tom Smith on vocals. The buried glimmer of pop in Michael Lerner's propulsive drumming and the oscillators and electronics of Simeon and Xian Hawkins sounds unusually clear in such unblinkingly abstract company.

William Burroughs even features, with a recording of a 'thank you' speech given by him at the Nova Convention. It is adroitly followed by an Evil Moisture track whose title explains its own construction, as well as the logic of its sequencing: "Automated Cutup Device Compaction Of The Audible Portion Of William S Burroughs' Private Confession To David Woodard And Aes-Nihil At Burroughs's Home In Lawrence Kansas 2.26.97". The spoken word plays a significant role in the collection as a whole. "Opening remarks" (a deadpan Neil Hamburger under the pseudonym Gregg Turkington) and "closing remarks" (by T Mikawa) bookend it playfully. The Dead C track featured, "Outside", is a snippet of bootlegged performance, prefaced by the bootleggers excitedly chatting as they approach the venue. It sums up the compilation's clever play on the distance between the purely abstract (noise) and the directly accessible (speech). *(SD)*

The rerelease of ***Ohm+: The Early Gurus Of Electronic Music 194B:B0*** (Ellipsis Arts 3XCD+DVD) was something of an arduous process, with each of its 42 tracks having to be individually relicensed. The effort was well worth it, however, for this remains the absolute first and last word in electronic music history primers. The very early works, such as Pierre Schaeffer's "Étude Aux Chemins De Fer", a 194B exercise in looping, and John Cage's "Williams Mix", a precisely ordered piece of sound chaos from 1952, hold a particular, monumental fascination, though the half-century time lag between the development of abstract art and abstract music begs all kinds of aesthetic questions. Among the many highlights are Pauline Oliveros's "Bye Bye, Butterfly" (which induces feelings of queasiness in the stomach of this writer), Morton Subotnik's "Silver Apples Of The Moon" and, as the pupils of the concrète masters begin to impinge on rock music, Holger Czukay's "Boat Woman Song" from 1969. The notion that this music 'paved the way for modern electronica' is a doubtful one, not just because this music should be judged on its intrinsic merits rather than its later, populist dilutions but also because many artists, like The Aphex Twin embarked on their own adventures with absolutely no knowledge of supposed way-pavers like Stockhausen.

This edition also comes with a bonus DVD, featuring a number of interviews, performances and animated visual realisations. Among the most charming of these is footage of an elderly Léon Theremin giving a demonstration of his instrument. Invaluable. *(DS)* ☐ *Reviewed by* Sam Davies, *Ken Hollings, Rhama Khazam, Brian Marley, David Stubbs and Derek Walmsley*

PHOTO COURTESY MIKE GAVIN

electronics manipulator Maja Ratkje and Hild Sofie Tafjord on French horn and more electronics also operate as the noise duo Fe-mail), theirs is a difficult music to pin down, and all the better for it.

The album title translates as "an absolutely terrible disease", which is about the least apt description of the music imaginable. Ratkje and co sound joyously alive to every moment, every opportunity for surprise. "Marbles" starts out as tiny, springy SME-style interplay, all mini vocal yelps and single-note trumpet smears, but then seems to melt before our ears into 1940s film music of the most dreamily romantic kind. And just as quickly, the mood shifts again, to something more restless and abrasive. I laughed out loud at the sheer speed of their ideas, but the most remarkable thing about them is not that they pile up absurdity on absurdity, gesture on gesture, but that each member of the group (the line-up is completed by instrumentalists Kristin Andersen and Lene Grenager) manages to balance their input so perfectly with the others, even at full pelt.

Also impressive is the pacing of the collection as a whole. Two big events occur late on: a locked horn loop whose repetition sounds startling among the endlessly agitated sonic ephemera that surrounds it, and a short but decisive burst of Fe-mail style noise terror involving Ratkje's Diamanda Galas-like croaking and cackling. The rest of the album seems to wind itself up towards these moments, but without ever sounding schematic or premeditated. A great achievement.

TAURPIS TULA
STEEL RODS BRUISE BUTTERFLIES
CHOCOLATE MONK CD-R

BY SAM DAVIES

As a title, *Steel Rods Bruise Butterflies* sounds like a bleak, brutal inversion of the Beat optimism of Sonic Youth's "Small Flowers Crack Concrete". Perhaps the threat of violence implicit in the title has preconditioned this listener, but it certainly feels like this is a set coming from a fairly dark place. Heather Leigh Murray's banshee keening feels as thin as a knife, for all that it is thickened with the distortion of overloaded circuitry. Her eerie microtonal shifts skewer through the mix, even when the trio hit their incandescent crescendos and the whole sound threatens to collapse in on itself.

Murray's vocalisations and sheets of pedal steel normally form a duo with *Wire* contributor David Keenan on guitar and radio manipulation, but for this 30 minute set they are also joined by Alex Neilson on percussion, following up on a recent trio tour. Neilson is a busy drummer – in more ways than one. Working with Richard Youngs, Mirror, Jandek, Bonnie 'Prince' Billy and Scatter, he is also a drummer in constant motion, dispensing low-end rumble and clattering stick-shift one moment before switching from kit to bells and bowed cymbals the next.

There is a sense of musical listening going on that means *Steel Rods* is not an obliterating howl throughout. Neilson's chimes pick up on quieter passages from his partners. A third of the way through, the trio agree they've hit an initial peak and drop away. The wheezy gleam of harmonica that follows is startling, recalling a similar recontextualisation of the instrument (within avant garde jazz rather than noise) by Archie Shepp on his brilliantly confrontational *Blasé*. Later, Neilson and Murray step back the better to foreground Keenan's guitar, which is reeling punchdrunk from the bludgeoning it's receiving. Listeners in the wrong mood may end up feeling the same way but, once surrendered to, this noise is fascinating in the oldest sense of the word, with all its suggestion of trance states of mind.

JOHN TILBURY
BARCELONA
ROSSBIN CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Recorded live during the Improvisa 2003 festival in Barcelona, Spain, this 36 minute solo improvisation is the first of its kind that John Tilbury has authorised for release. He's well known, of course, for his imaginative and sensitive solo interpretations of piano scores by Howard Skempton, John Cage, Dave Smith, Christian Wolff and Morton Feldman, and his work as an improvisor with AMM is nonpareil, but prior to *Barcelona*, his most exposed improvisation was to be found on the 2003 Erstwhile release *Ouos For Ooris*, a splendid collaboration with his then AMM colleague Keith Rowe. On *Ooris*, Rowe occasionally drew back, adopting a supportive or even a noncommittal role, to allow Tilbury time and space in which to develop the music according to his own lights. It provided a tantalising glimpse into Tilbury's working methods and, in that regard, only *Barcelona* trumps it.

It should be stated from the outset that Tilbury's music stands at one remove from much of the improvisation we hear in concert and on CD. First of all, he's not a garrulous player – his music is pleasingly free of the clutter and incoherence that often characterises the genre (and make no mistake, it is a genre). Rather than churn through less inspirational moments (a process wittily described by Steve Beresford as "roughage") or forge continuities between discrete musical events that should perhaps have remained discrete, Tilbury tends to insert a measure of silence. But there are always continuities in his music, however tenuous they may seem to be, and *Barcelona* has a remarkable feeling of wholeness.

Moreover, he never overestimates the value of an idea. This fastidiousness and deliberateness have led to the criticism that he isn't really improvising, not in the absolute sense of the word, that his ideas and how he structures them owe too great a debt to the musics he interprets. It's a misconception to which *Barcelona* firmly puts paid. From moment to moment you can hear him testing ideas for their musical worth and discarding or developing them accordingly. However much one may be familiar with his music, the lines of development aren't predictable. The instrument is partially prepared, and Tilbury discreetly mixes the prepared strings with regular tonality. There are also episodes in which he creates a banshee wail by leaning into the body of the instrument and drawing implements along the length of the strings. Though these techniques in historical terms may be considered old hat, they have never sounded fresher than they do here.

TORTOISE & BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY
THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD
DOMINO CD

BY MIKE BARNES

At the time of writing no one was able to confirm what prompted this curious liaison, but having played this CD many times in ignorance, the enigma only adds to the appeal. However, the blurb on the promo, that this is "a bit like *The Basement Tapes* as presented in the digital age", is best discounted. On the surface this seems like an unlikely combination of musicians playing a bunch of unlikely covers. But then again, Tortoise gave a fine account of themselves playing on Buck 65's *Secret House Against The World*, while Oldham's recent work with Björk, as well as his his raw and noisy live album *Summer In The Southeast*, show that his voice travels well beyond his trademark neo-Country home.

The nearest we get to that approach here is "Pancho", written by David Harner for Don Williams, and sung quite beautifully by Oldham with a little help from Pink Nasty (aka Sara Beck) on backing vocals. What most appeals about the selection of material is that there's no knowingness or unnecessary drollery involved, even when delivering a rather disturbed version of Elton John and Bernie Taupin's "Daniel", its tender melody soured by some grainy electronic interjections.

The chemistry between Oldham and the group is evident from the off with the much-covered Brazilian tune, "Cravo E Canela", a joyous energy surge decorated with synthetic brass and dancing tuned percussion. Richard Thompson's rough hewn, lugubrious "The Calvary Cross" has its structure deftly reshaped by new piano and guitar voicings, and a hymnal chorus. Mike Watt's "It's Expected I'm Gone", originally recorded by The Minutemen, is rendered as a sort of avant rock epic with massive treated guitar interjections by Jeff Parker, and John McEntire at his crispest and most propulsive behind the kit. Oldham's voice holds its own in all this commotion.

Also subjected to this peculiar alchemy are Melanie Safka's "(Some Say) I Got Devil", Bruce Springsteen's "Thunder Road", Mark Mothersbaugh of Devo's "That's Pep" and more besides. There's such a feel of fresh invention about this set that soon one is compiling one's own fantasy covers album for these guys to tackle. Or maybe they could work on some original material. Now how about that?

VARIOUS
CHOUBI CHOUBI: FOLK AND POP SOUNDS FROM IRAQ
SUBLIME FREQUENCIES CD

BY MARC MASTERS

Art is a casualty in any war, but it's hard to fathom how much creative work lies under the rubble still being created in Iraq. The recordings on *Choubi Choubi!* weren't even found in Iraq, but rather in Syria, Europe and the Iraqi neighbourhoods of Detroit. Still, there's no guarantee that this music survives inside its home country, as compiler Mark Gergis explains in his sleevenotes, most musicians are considered outcasts in the Arab world even during peacetime.

Many Iraqi styles from the 80s and 90s are represented here, but all are propelled by bullet-like percussion performed on a nomadic hand drum known as the zanbour. The drilling rhythms have a distorted, electronic feel, not far from the amplified thumb-piano beats of Congolese juggernaut Konono No 1. Typically this relentless barrage is set against the winding, high-pitched melodies of fiddles, reeds and synths. On *Choubi Choubi!*'s best tracks, a soaring vocal also weaves around the repetitive melody. Sadun Jabir's gruff howl on "Ashhad Biannak Hilou" snakes through like a jazz solo, while on the uncredited "Ahl Al Aqil", frantic fiddles jab at a helium-injected croon. The sky-scorching vocal on Sajada Al Ubaid's "Ala Honak" earns a category of its own, stretching into unmappable sonic terrain.

Many of the tracks here follow the same basic formula, giving *Choubi Choubi!* a slight tint of monotony, but three cuts by 70s socialist rocker Ja'afar Hassan supply quick relief. His songs are like soundtracks from lost Iraqxploitation films, with dramatic organs, Morricone-ish guitar melodies and suavely star-struck vocals. Even with Hassan's inclusion, the work on *Choubi Choubi!* is just a thin sliver of Iraqi music, but its rescue from ruin is massively important.

VARIOUS
TONE OF FINLAND
CRYSTAL EYE 2XCD

BY LOUISE GRAY

That club culture, specifically gay club culture, and a large slew of recorded sound share a symbiotic relationship is not a novel observation – it started long before disco, hi-NRG and House came along. But it seems that gay nightlife and its soundtrack have reached their apotheosis in the electronic music of the past 25 years. From Bobby O onwards, long instrumentals structured around a building tension and a final explosion of disco handclaps (or whatever) have aimed at replicating a kind of all-male, homosocial jouissance. In this respect, the clones of Kraftwerk's *Man Machine* were spot on. This is not distant history to the people at Helsinki's Crystal Eye, who put the coyly named *Tone Of Finland* together. But this is more than a sonic homage to the finely drawn, spectacularly tumescent soldiers, sailors and lumberjacks that make up the oeuvre of Touko Laaksonen, the illustrator who went under the name of Tom of Finland, it's also a response to a recent documentary about his work.

In fact it's Elliot Sharp's original soundtrack to Ilppo Pohjola's *Tom Of Finland – Daddy And The Muscle Academy* that provides the base material for Tone. Reproduced here in a remixed version on the second CD, Sharp has made a digitalised concrète journey down dark, metalled alleys and into subterranean clubs. As an aural equivalent of Tom's vaguely menacing men, the CD works well, though it's only at its finale that it gets truly weird, as Circle's "Morningstar" contributes an electronic meets American Primitive feel.

The fun gets going on the first CD, where 14 Finnish artists, DJs and mixers congregate. DJ Slow's "Tom's Men" makes a delirious grab for the disco glitterball, with its handclaps and synthesized strings, while Pekka Lappi's "Contact" conjures up a fantasy meat market, with his scratchy tape noises, police sirens and

The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

Bunch of assholes: The Butthole Surfers

They may not be quite as notorious now, but **The Butthole Surfers** were once arguably the most extreme and confrontational outfit to emerge from the underbelly of Reagan's America. Possessed by a raging anti-humanism to match Big Black's, but with a ferocious humour more tilted towards the wilfully perverse and scatological than the creepy, their string of albums in the mid to late 80s pushed the envelope of rock sound through a car-crash of art-punk, Metal, noise and some distinctly Texan influences. Reissued once again on CD by the group's own Latino Bugger Veil imprint, there is a wealth of pungent weirdness waiting to be discovered by the uninitiated.

The Butthole Surfers debut EP for Jello Biafra's Alternative Tentacles label in 1983 sets the tone. Typical song titles: "Bar-B-Q Pope", "The Revenge of Anus Presley". The latter alternates Gibby Haynes's from-the-gut ranting with Paul Leary's raging guitar squalls, which cross into harmolodics territory in a style that anticipates Neil Hagerty's playing in Royal Trux. The *Live PCPPEP* comes on the same CD.

Transferring to Touch And Go for 1984's *Psychic... Powerless... Another Man's Sac*, The Surfers moved further from the powerchord textures of hardcore and into longer slabs of self-destructing guitar crunch. "Lady Sniff" condenses practically their whole sonic manifesto: slap bass, bursts of birdsong, spit and vomit, a stop-start bulldozing riff and vocals like a cattle-prodded Beefheart.

1986's *Rembrandt Pussyhorse* (packaged here with the Cream Corn EP) features their punishing, monolithic cover of The Guess Who's "American Woman" and emphasises the massive twin attack of drummers King Coffey and Theresa Nervosa, which comes on like a parody of Rick Rubin's contemporary breakbeats: reverb-drenched but colossal. The backwoods Gothic horror of "Creep In The Cellar" deliberately plays on The Surfers' status as a kind of musical *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

The tempi on 1987's *Locust Abortion Technician* slow to a grind. Haynes introduces his Gibbytronix vocal FX unit, which, when pitched down into the bass frequencies on "Graveyard", tricks the ear into thinking things are running at half-speed. The music is as pummelling and denatured as ever. *Hairway To Steven* in 1988 drew mainstream attention, just as the intensity of their sound assault eased back (relatively speaking). Lengthy opener "Jimi" even settles into a strolling acoustic strum. But the scabrous humour remains: no track titles are given, only grotesque Chapman Brothers-like doodles of rabbits, syringes and horses.

All these albums are fired by The Surfers' incredibly potent central vision, one hardened no doubt by their communal living set-up. It's salutary to note that Haynes only committed to the group after he had fully qualified as an accountant. *(SO)*

In 1984, an untitled cassette was issued in Belgium in a tiny release of 50, the fruit of a collaboration between **Vortex Campaign**, **The New Blockaders** and **Coil**. Not surprisingly, the scarcity of the release, coupled with its importance as an early document in the careers of the noise pioneers concerned, gave it a certain legendary status. This reissue (Black Rose CD) packages the original two pieces (of roughly 15 and 30 minutes each) with three further Vortex Campaign tracks – two never before released – for an edition of 500 in hand-printed sleeves.

The sound generated by the three acts together is not the overloaded blitz of each act trying to make itself heard. In fact, it is fairly muted. The results are a rather like being dragged through miles of subterranean pipes: linear, dark and claustrophobic. And that's not a criticism. The muffled shriek and shudder of tape loop hiss accumulates like silt, obscuring the distant, filtered source sounds. Occasionally some sonorous sheet-metal percussion reveals itself, or something that might once have been identifiable as a voice, but the textures are predominantly gritty and indeterminate.

The three Vortex Campaign tracks which follow cohere well with the two collaborations. The palette remains austere in its gloominess, and there is a sense of suspended time: the steady rhythm of the loops becomes submerged, and the sounds themselves feel decayed, degraded and aged. *(SO)*

As well as his continuing appearances (and occasional recordings) as Ole Trip Computer Die, Lepke Buchwater can occasionally be found at certain left of centre events in London, projecting crazy stuff on walls or DJing with moth-eaten Oansettes, even turning the airwaves of Resonance FM to anarchy. Back in the hallowed time of This Heat, glory days for English experimental rock, his shady trio **Milk From Cheltenham** clanked and futtered away in rank studios and whiffy bedrooms, labouring over the delightfully dangerous music collected on *Triptych Of Poisoners* (Alga Marghen CD). Issued on singles on the It's War, Boys label at the tail end of the 70s, it's resolute Outsiderism ignored any of the then-current moves and tropes, which makes it unassimilable even in the current climate of revival of the shittest post-punkery. Liberal use of echo machine gives many of these 19 tracks a disorientating edge, but without the distancing effect of more 'trippy' music or dub – like an overfed, underexercised mastiff, it demands attention (and wants to get out and piss on some pavements). Repeatedly inventive and, like Xentos Bentos's Homosexuals (with which this group had close links), the sense of malice and cheerful destruction is spilling out over the surface. Unlike fellow travellers The Art Bears, MFC rock – Victorr (sic) Lounge's wayward yet on the money drum flails see to that – which is why the closest comparison would be something like The Pop Group, although MFC would never attain anything like the hip cachet of those Bristolians, Cheltenham being just the wrong side of Chipping Sodbury. *(RY)*

Why has it taken so long to reissue trombonist **Julien Priester**'s *Love, Love* (ECM CD)? Rumour has it that because it is one of very few that ECM founder Manfred Eicher didn't produce, it remained way down the priority list. But now this organic/electric jazz masterwork, recorded in 1973, is finally available after more than three decades as a collector's item. Priester's comparative lack of recorded output makes it easy to forget what a terrific pedigree player he was – just four years prior to *Love, Love* he was still working in Duke Ellington's group after a decade playing with jazz stars like Johnny Griffin, Sam Rivers and Freddie Hubbard. Electrification occurred when he became embedded in Herbie Hancock's *Sextant* unit, but *Love, Love* stands as a heartfelt singularity (his second and final ECM record, 1977's *Polarization*, is a considerably lesser achievement). Remastering has exaggerated this record's highly unusual production quality (Priester and synth player Pat Gleeson take the credit). Following the opening two minutes of space noodle, drummer 'Kamau' Eric Gravatt (Weather Report) and bassist Ron McLure (Wynton Kelly, Joe Henderson), slowly fade in, already teasing out an insistent, fervent riff, weirdly phased, whose every fourth beat is cut short with a little tumbling-rock snare (I'm told the time signature is an infernal 15/8), fighting its way forward as though an edifice of feeling is being steadily eroded.

The spaciousness and subtle palette of *Love, Love* sets out on a very different tangent from the macho, effusive Mahavishnu Orchestra and Miles Davis's *Dark Magus* hothouse. In the opening section the instrumentalists cohere furtively around the rhythm section, which ploughs onwards with a monotony worthy of Can's Jaki Liebezeit or Neu!'s Klaus Dinger. The rich, dark texture is sealed in by the synthesizer structures of Pat Gleeson. Gleeson's electronics provided the cybernetic core of *Sextant* and set Herbie off on his trail towards disco, but Gleeson here is totally off the leash, emulsioning his own space in the background with skims of dolphin-warble and primordial soup concrète. Priester himself maintains a low profile during the first of the two suites that make up the album, but leads the company in the triumphant moondance of "Eternal Worlds" with whoops of delight on the 'bone, ejaculating the sense of elation Columbus's lookouts must have felt on first sighting the distant peaks of Hispaniola. *(RY)*

Volunteered Slavery and *Blacknuss* (both Atlantic Masters CD) find **Rahsaan Roland Kirk** attempting to appeal to the sort of rock audiences who were checking out Miles Davis and Don Ellis in the late 60s/early 70s. On *Blacknuss* (recorded 1971) Kirk flits between spirituals and pop tunes by the likes of Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder. The warm integrity of his playing manages to transcend the generic sub-Motown backings, but ultimately this is compromised stuff from a man who only few years earlier produced *Rip, Rig And Panic*. *Volunteered Slavery* combines a vibrant live set from the 1968 Newport Jazz Festival with studio material, and is more the ticket. The live set climaxes with a John Coltrane tribute, and the charismatic sound of Kirk's tenor saxophone fusing with his inventive lines gives an awe-inspiring display of his capabilities. The earlier studio material is pretty good too, especially a version of Bacharach/David's "I Say A Little Prayer" which is overhauled into an edgy tour de force. *(PC)*

Steven R Smith's *Kohl* (Emperor Jones LP) was originally released as a limited CD-R on the Jewelled Antler label back in 2002. At the time, it felt like the culmination of Smith's solo releases, peeling away the melodramatic elements of his music and focusing on the cracked emotional core. Originally intended as an album of solo piano recordings, *Kohl* ended up as Smith's most stripped-back set, a selection of one-take pieces for guitar bathed in starlit reverb and bled to cassette under a naked flame. You can hear Smith's fascination with traditional music throughout these nine tracks, as he scrawls delicate melodic lines onto compositions that sometimes recall the keening qualities of the folk songs of Eastern Europe. Smith would later expand upon this tendency on his Hala Strana recordings. He also sources inspiration from jazz, recasting The Art Ensemble Of Chicago's "Odwalla" for an acoustic guitar that's strung slack and loose. Packaged beautifully in a screen printed sleeve, with an art card print and hand-assembled booklet of text and image with bags of unrefined kohl and isfand seeds stapled to the pages, *Kohl* is a gorgeous set of repentant threnodies that ring out lonely and true, all flesh, bone and sinew. *(JO)* ☐ *Reviewed by Philip Clark, Jon Dale, Sam Davies and Rob Young*

PHOTO: PETER ANDERSON

drills signalling danger. Jimi Tenor's "Tender Feelings" are anything but, and Juhani Liimatainen's "TomTomTom" builds a rhythm out of repetition, slaps and a tornado of noise. There's much that's good here – right down to the never seen before Laaksonen collage works reproduced in the pages of the deluxe version of *Tone*, one that's bound, naturally, in black leather.

STEPHEN VITIELLO & DAVID TRONZO
SCRATCHY MONSTERS, LAUGHING GHOSTS
NEW ALBION CD

BY DAVID STUBBS

Sound and media artist Stephen Vitiello is, according to one online biography, intrigued by "the physical aspect of sound and its potential to define the form and atmosphere of a spatial environment". His past explorations include a six month residency on the 91st floor of New York's World Trade Center, whose destruction was treated, in a slew of memorial postcards, as if it were some noble living organism laid low, as great a source of bereavement as the deaths of the people inside it.

Vitiello's trademark tremulous synth tones are in evidence here from the outset. On "The Long Walk 1", they warmly suggest an urban environment exuding from its very brickwork a palpable hum of tension into the air, the ominous perma-drone of the city. Past collaborations with the likes of Scanner have proven very fertile. Here, however, the contrast he strikes with slide guitarist David Tronzo, as well as Michael J Schumacher on piano, engages through its incongruity. Tronzo's attractively mewing slide figurines have an ambling bluesy cadence on the series of pieces entitled "Long Walk", though they gradually develop into more complex cat's cradles of ideas as they go, with phrases slithering wormlike from his fretboard.

When Schumacher comes to the fore on "The Long Walk 4", the music is nicely stretched three ways, and by "Bones" the various elements have separated out, almost to the point of abstraction. But quickly, Vitiello chimes in with some bright suggestions and a reconciliation, which seemed unlikely at the album's outset, is achieved.

MARK WASTELL
VIBRA #2
LONGBOX CD

BY CLIVE BELL

This CD contains half an hour of glorious tam tam sound from Sealed Knot member and London's Sound 323 record shop mogul Mark Wastell. Its predecessor, *Vibra #1*, was released on Mattin's wmo/r label in 2004. At 34 minutes, *Vibra #2* is ten minutes longer, but both were taped by Graham Halliwell in Norfolk at the same 2004 session.

As you might expect from a lower case Improv specialist, this is subtle playing and painstaking sonic exploration. At no point does Wastell strip to the waist and whack seven shades of hell out of the metal, as though working for the Rank Organisation. However, tam tam fans already drooling at the prospect of some really deep listening will not be disappointed. Deep sea listening, if you will – like a diving bell, the tam tam in these hands disonents, overloads and plays tricks on the ears.

Vibra #1 kicked off with a good six minutes of straight ahead, dense tam tam roar. While standing in the slipstream of a mighty gong is certainly exhilarating, *Vibra #2* is maybe a more nuanced performance. Wastell conjures dimly glowing tones from soft strikes, pulsing like beams from a distant lighthouse. The listener is drawn ever deeper into the rich sound, in which howls, whistles and weird, clashing intervals all seem to cohabit. By the 17 minute mark, Wastell is in the zone, a state of reverie that continues to the end of the disc.

The particular tam tam owned by Wastell and used on this disc belonged to the late Roger Sutherland, founder of the group Morphogenesis, who were themselves masters of dense, textural Improv. By dedicating the *Vibra* series to Sutherland, Wastell stresses his links with earlier incarnations of British improvised music.

TREVOR WATTS
WORLD SONIC
HI 4 HEAD CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Alto saxophonist Trevor Watts tells me that he embarked upon this solo project with some reluctance; he simply prefers playing in the company of other musicians. A founding member of The Spontaneous Music Ensemble, the superior crossover group Amalgam and the mesmerising polyrhythmic ensemble Moiré Music, Watts is regularly heard these days in the context of the ebullient Celebration Band and in duet with fine percussionist Jamie Harris. Thankfully, though, Watts capitulated to insistent requests of producer Nick Dart and the result is *World Sonic*, an accomplished and thoroughly enjoyable set of 18 alto improvisations, ranging in length from little more than a minute to just over five.

A capacity for purposeful circular breathing is impressively on show here. Watts long ago turned his back on what he came to recognise as cliches emerging within a congealing repertoire of supposedly free improvising. Instead, he has attended to the melodic and rhythmic invention of disparate musical traditions and has developed his own playing, not in imitation, but within awareness of those options. As a result Watts is not really alone here; his playing echoes and interweaves quite evidently with the sounds of other music he has encountered in his many years of extensive listening and travelling. In his imagination, he is clearly embedded in fertile music making company. Hockets of singing Pygmies in Central Africa, drones of Eastern European bagpipes, the nasal warbling of Middle Eastern flutes, nocturnal Harlem jazz, intricate Celtic reels, pentatonic gamelan tunes and numerous other strands reverberate into these traveller's yarns, unassuming and effective elaborations upon global sounds issued from the saxophonist's home town, Hastings on the Sussex coast.

WILCO
KICKING TELEVISION
NONESUCH 2XCD/LP

BY MIA CLARKE

The excellent acoustics of Chicago's Vic Theatre, an ornate turn of the century vaudeville playhouse in the city centre, made it an ideal location for Wilco to record their first live album. This 23 track collection, which spans two discs of recordings sifted from four consecutive shows, mainly features material from 2004's *A Ghost Is Born*, plus an inevitably hefty serving of material from the crowd pleasing *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. A dash of some obscure older material also makes the cut, but the focus of *Kicking Television* is Wilco's more accessible back catalogue.

As to be expected when a commercially successful yet critically respected group performs in their hometown, the response is positive. Particularly after the release of Sam Jones's documentary *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*, which chronicled the group's turbulent parting from the Reprise record label in 2001, Wilco appear to have attracted an adoring and loyal fanbase. Their presence is immediately felt on *Kicking Television*'s opening track, "Misunderstood", on which enthusiastic singalongs and jubilant cheers flood over frontman Jeff Tweedy's vocals. "How dignified is it to come from Kansas City to Chicago to see Wilco?" Jeff Tweedy asks the crowd at one point, to a tirade of whoops and whistles.

Live, Wilco do little to alter the impression given by their studio recordings. They are a polished, professional and occasionally predictable group. One gets the feeling that it wouldn't hurt them to loosen up a little. At times their set is so well rehearsed that even the more raucous moments end up sounding disappointingly premeditated. The recent addition of guitarist Nels Cline, however, seems to have encouraged Tweedy to be a bit more daring with his increasingly experimental vision, and the improvised, extensive freakouts on tracks such as "Poor Places" add some excitement to what would otherwise be a fairly restrained live album.

The second disc of *Kicking Television* is certainly more open. The Neu! influenced ramble of "Spiders (Kidsmoke)" allows Cline to assault the motonk rhythms of drummer Glen Kotche with searing, clamorous solos and, as Tweedy later points out to the crowd, leaves him with bleeding hands.

A cover of Charles Wright's "Comment (If All Men Are Truly Brothers)" closes the set, with Tweedy's raspy tenor working around the threads of organ and mandolin. It's an appropriate high point on which to conclude, as it captures Wilco at the height of their powers.

PETER WRIGHT
YELLOW HORIZON
PSEUDOARCANA CD

DESOLATION BEAUTY VIOLENCE
IKUISUUS CD

BY JON DALE

Peter Wright is one of New Zealand's most rewarding artists. His early recordings, released under a plethora of names via the kRkRkRk and Apoplexy labels, saw the artist stretching his limbs and trying out various approaches to sculpting sound. Wright recorded *Yellow Horizon* and *Desolation Beauty Violence* in May and June of 2003, just after his relocation to London. They capture his work in transitional mode, adjusting to new climes by refining his vision. His more assured guiding hand lends these pieces an elegant and refined tenor.

On both discs, Wright feeds a Danelectro 12 string guitar through effects, turning the instrument's wood-and-string interface into an abstract machine, flaking melodies and phrases from the guitar and blurring them into massive blocks of choral sound. On *Yellow Horizon*, he strings eight foggy compositions together to form a tribute to his South Island home. "Diffa's Dyke" ruminates on a small clutch of notes that smear into each other, a huge haze of gaseous texture. The title track strings siren notes over a deep, resonating pulse. The result recalls Roy Montgomery's "Twilight Conversation" from his own tribute to New Zealand, *Scenes From The South Island*. *Yellow Horizon*'s evocation of personally and psychically loaded places could well act as a sequel to Montgomery's defining opus.

Desolation Beauty Violence is not tied together with such a conceptual thread, but it is every bit as gorgeous as *Yellow Horizon*. Originally released on Brad Rose's Foxglove label, *Desolation Beauty Violence* makes explicit the relationship between Wright's guitar and field recordings, with the two bleeding into each other while marking out torched zones of reverb. Wright sometimes lets his guitar playing sing through the web of effects, as with the prickly chimes of "Like Clockwork" or the brittle strum of "Leaving Town". However, his compositions really excel when he pilots a few chords into gorgeously lonely phrases, as with the (perhaps unintentional) Popol Vuh homage of "Point Blank", with Wright slowly spearing his guitar into orbit.

MICHIYO YAGI
SEVENTEEN
ZIPANGU CD

BY JEZ RILEY

In 1993, I heard Michiyo Yagi play a piece by Tadao Sawai on an otherwise average CD of koto music. Even then, her playing stood out on account of its passionate exploration and subtlety. Yagi is a member of Hoahio and Paulowina Crush, among others. However, it is in the solo context that one really gets to experience her full powers. Of course, the koto, along with other Asian zithers, appears to offer endless possibilities but in clumsy hands can scupper even the simplest modern approach. Yagi's 1999 Tzadik CD *Shizuku* was a revelation, as she drew new voices from her instrument and combined them with the koto's more familiar graceful range.

With *Seventeen*, Yagi has chosen to use only the 17 string jushichigen bass koto, which has resulted in a reflective, sensitive set, stemming from both improvised and composed elements. There are calm, lush tracks such as "Obsidian", "The Bicycle Ride" and "Topa", which almost disappears in places. Of the more overtly experimental pieces, "Rouge" is my least favourite track. There's something about its Prog rock inspired rhythms that leaves me cold. A real highlight, however, is the 13 minute "Storyteller". Inspired by the music of the Korean kayagum, an instrumental relative of the koto, its 13 minutes fly past and I would quite happily sit through a full hour of that track alone.

It is always remarkable to hear someone who can advance an instrument's heritage, reconnect with its essential spirit and rescue it from the over-sweetened syrup that clogs up much of the world's traditional instrumental output these days. It's even more satisfying when they do so while also creating music of both beauty and original power. □

Avant Rock

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

AARON DILLOWAY
BEGGAR MASTER/PRAYER FLUSH
HANSON LP

Former Wolf Eyes member Aaron Dilloway returns from his recent visit to Kurtipur, Nepal with the solo album he recorded out there. Pressed up in an edition of 300 copies on thick black vinyl and squeezed inside a black and white silk-screened sleeve illustrated with crudely carved cartoon scenes of bondage and knife attack, the "Beggar Master" side is a pulsating electronic lurch of sickening signal bombardment and feedback attack. At the back of the mix hisses a venomous beat, which gives way to an interlude of warped looping and rabid reverb before the main machine crushes back.

The "Prayer Flush" side is also intense, but more mystical in parts, as the unforgiving abstract electronic assault (which sounds as though it was performed live in the street) subsides to let a flickering black hole of calm open up. The rest is beautiful chaos, a sheer drop into the unknown that ends with the stifled, subliminal droning of snake charmer's horns and a final taped scream from Dilloway's wife Enka that plummets into a shrieking, bad acid retching end groove.

DAVENPORT
DAVENPORT
NOT NOT FUN LP

DAVENPORT
FREE COUNTRY
LAST VISIBLE DOG CD

Headed by one Clay Ruby, Madison, Wisconsin clan group Davenport are the latest in a seemingly endless line of cult improvised chant ensembles that already includes Sunburned Hand Of The Man, Double Leopards and Wooden Wand & The Vanishing Voice. Davenport, however, have really taken that New Weird America tag to heart as their self-titled LP gleefully demonstrates. On a single slab of 'aged blood' coloured vinyl, Ruby's collective of musical miscreants send up a huge bubble of bone rattling incantation, some of which has been captured on a hand-held cassette recorder. These strange field recordings document the group in full mystical flow, as they whoop and holler over primitive repeated beats and a looped vocal until something resembling a huge green skull made from smog materialises over them and begins to groan. The marginally more controlled *Free Country* has been released with some foresight by Last Visible Dog. Here one is reminded of Charalambides's *Union* LP on Siltbreeze (especially when the disembodied voice sample of a rural preacher invades the mix) and also early Jackie-O Motherfucker in the way that the various instruments and pre-recorded fragments are assembled, but the end result is enormously fascinating and slightly scary to behold.

EDITH FROST
IT'S A GAME
DRAG CITY CD

San Antonio born singer-songwriter Edith Frost's fourth album of songs is another beautifully crafted collection that somewhat sticks out like a hammered thumb in this column. It shouldn't, though, as Frost's avant rock roots are impeccable, with members of Gastr Del Sol, High Llamas and Sea And Cake being involved in her past work. Add to that an admiration for Will Oldham (a factor that prompted her to send her demos to Drag City for consideration) and these lush and sensitively sculpted songs take on a special significance. The arrangements give *It's A Game* its bite, however, with shimmering strings gliding through the dreamlike "A Mirage". And "My Lover Won't Call" has an edgy hard-boiled murder ballad feel that once heard is hard to shrug off.

THE HOSPITALS
I'VE VISITED THE ISLAND OF JOOKS AND JAZZ
LOAD CD

In the same (surgical) spirit as The Magik Markers or Lightning Bolt, San Francisco duo The Hospitals peel back the skin on punk rock's zippered skull and inject their own lethal dose of nuke 'n' roll into its Clash-conscious befuddled brain. Guitarist Ned Meiners and Drummer Adam Stonehouse kick up a storm of tangled tunes and ruptured drum beats on this constantly entertaining selection of primitive instrument bludgeon – an exercise that suggestively teams the vocal slur of Mark E Smith with the blitzing electronics onslaught of Masonna. Further infected with backwards singing, shredded tape replay, splintered guitar solos and kick bucket drum thunder, *I've Visited The Land Of Jooks And Jazz* is a thrilling and sometimes shocking journey into a musical genre that by now should feel familiar but still manages to be alien and almost hostile.

HEATHAN SHAME
SPEED THE PARTING GUEST
TWISTED VILLAGE CD

Cambridge, Massachusetts trio Heathan Shame return with a second helping of severely damaged, high decibel rock improv that sounds sensationally like Tony Conrad jamming with Wolf Eyes. What appears on first hearing to be an amplified violin and electronics workout, however, is in reality trumpet, drums and guitar, played at an air scorching volume and intensity that makes it difficult to untangle Greg Kelley's blistering horn explosions from Wayne Rogers's and Kate Village's amp boosted guitar mantras. The huge title track in particular stands out here as a fabulously complex weave of feedback and distortion that knits seamlessly together to form a sonic cloak of free squealing, joyful noise.

KITES
PEACE TRIALS
LOAD CD

Providence, Rhode Island sound artist, electronic circuit wrecker and singer-songwriter Kites has worked alongside such noise monsters as Hair Police, Neon Hunk, Mindflayer and fellow Providence resident Prurient (with whom he released a memorable split 12" on Load) as part of an ever mutating group of noise rockers intent on breathing some new fire into the form. Kites shifts from bouts of electronic crash and what sounds like a wrestling match with a giant robot, to actual songs with lyrics to die for. Delivered in a random Syd Barrett styled monotone, tracks like "Exploded Face", "Creepy Crawl" and "Baby Fawn With Broken Legs" add an extra distorted dimension to Kites's alternate effects pedal detonations. Not knowing exactly what to expect next is what makes this latest collection of uppers and downers so addictive.

LE VOLUME COURBE
I KILLED MY BEST FRIEND
HONEST JON'S CD

Helped along by a musical gang of friends and admirers (including My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields), Charlotte Martineau's Le Volume Courbe ensemble have come up with an atmospheric set of songs that evokes the work of French Chanson singer Brigitte Fontaine and early 60s UK pop psych. Moodily arranged, with elements of jazz and subdued rock rumbling through the songs, *I Killed My Best Friend* is best appreciated as a soundtrack for a movie that hasn't been made yet. It really works when these cinematic traces flood the project, especially on "Who Are You?", where a strange sampled voice pattern invades the seemingly innocently paced pop song to give it an hallucinogenic air of menace. Also effective is Martineau's dazed cover of Nina Simone's "I Got Life", which she croons naively over a simple piano and shuffling Moondog percussion. When she mumbles *"Got my blood"* as the instrumentation abruptly sputters out midway, the urge to punch the air in salutation is almost irresistible.

MOUTHUS
RECORDED 10-12-03
OLDE ENGLISH SPELING BEE LP

MOUTHUS & AXOLOTL
12 25 04
OLDE ENGLISH SPELING BEE LP

The freakedelic New York noise duo Mouthus (guitarist Brian Sullivan and drummer Nate Nelson) return with a live recording that only enhances the power that they previously exhibited on previous releases *Loam* and *Snow Globes*. *10-12-03* is a stunning blur of amplifier overload, as Sullivan fists the fretboard of his instrument while Nelson jackhammers his kit to dust in the background. On *12 25 04*, they are joined by San Francisco duo Axolotl (Karl and Mark Bauer) for a session that was recorded at The Tarpit. Their contribution introduces a more calming, but no less intense, presence into the music as Sullivan's sustained guitar chimes are slowly joined by the Bauers' ghostly electronics and vocals, along with Nelson's padded drum motifs. This is holy music from two high priests of the present noise/rock scene.

RACCOO-OO-OON
THE CAVE OF SPIRITS FOREVER
TIME LAG CD-R

"Raccoo-oo-oon is Ryan, Daren, Andy and Shawn" is the only information given about this intriguing quartet of chirpy improvisors on the ever-interesting Time Lag label from Portland, Maine. *The Cave Of Spirits Forever* carries on the label's fine tradition of discovering groups and musicians playing under the wire. Here rock and folk frolics with free jazz in a way that suggests some kind of ritualistic behaviour took place during the recording.

This intensifies on "Stick Eaters", which is a heavy on the drums rock pow-wow complete with Indian war whoops. Presented in a piece of card decorated with silk-screened cave drawings, *The Cave Of Spirits Forever* is yet another desirable handcrafted artifact for the audio pile.

SHORA
MALVAL
CONSPIRACY CD

From Switzerland, Shora are an instrumental quartet who have already released a split CD with Merzbow and their own *Shaping The Random* debut. *Malval* is their second full length icy blast of glacial guitar driven fury, revolving around spectacularly soaring progressive riffing and punctuated with holocaustic drum slams, penetrating flourishes of keyboard expertise and ghostly synthesised choral embellishment. This is a rich and heady mix of musical styles and emotions that brings to mind a more energetic Bohren & Der Club Of Gore jamming with members of Tool, Isis and Neurosis. Shora's deftly delivered instrumental precision is tightly constructed, the only chinks in their musical body armour being the spaces between songs. Unfortunately their obsession with intricacy eventually renders their music indigestible at one sitting. When served individually, however, the songs on *Malval* become something to be savoured.

TALIBAM!
TALIBAM!
EVOLVING EAR CD-R

Talibam! are a trio from New York City made up of drummer Kevin Sheah, synth player Matt Motel and baritone saxophone (or feedbacksaphone, as he likes to call it) blaster Ed Bear. It's the packaging to this, their first commercially available CD-R, that kicks you in the head first. In a sleeve constructed from chopped, taped and customised recycled record covers (my copy uses some Bee Gees monstrosity) is stuffed Talibam!'s lastest – together with a random chunk of vinyl shrapnel (Rick Wakeman's *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth!*) that has been mysteriously stickered over with a photo of a Silver Apples fan. The music matches the mania of the packaging perfectly as the trio let loose a Mooged up Sun Ra meets The Stooges blast of sonic sludge that gleefully destroys everything in its path, as if on a mission.

Together with The Hospitals (see above), this is another filthy sounding fusillade of disturbing distortion, which should be sought out immediately. Only 200 copies exist, so, as they say in anal retentive record collecting circles, don't sleep if you want one. □

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

COLOMA
NO MOVING PARTS REMIXES
KLEIN 12"

On their new album *Dovetail*, the Cologne duo Coloma have gone more theatrical than ever, adding horns and organs to their formerly Bakelite-brittle electro-pop and ballooning Rob Taylor's vocals to bursting. Justus Koehncke takes that expansion as his starting point, stretching "No Moving Parts" into a supple mesh threaded with electronic squiggles and stacked top-heavy with augmented chords, while a disco fillip drives quietly through the drunken changes. But it's André Kraml who really bags the big one, opening with a lazy bassline that wouldn't move if the mountain were coming down. With minimal tweaks and the guidance of some ghost keyboards he assuredly pushes it, through a blindfolded series of chord changes, into one of the most insistent, distilled and above all subtle funk grooves I've heard, stubborn and shuffling but with a kick in its step all the same.

LINDSTROM
ANOTHER STATION
FEEDELITY 12"

Lindstrom's been riding a wave of popularity for his psychedelic, disco-tinged House anthems, one of the best of which remains this year's "I Feel Space", an endlessly morphic epic that bounces over congas, Italo synths and soaring leads, floating higher with every step. His new track begins with yet another space walk — wispy keyboards unspooling like oxygen lines while a tinny beat counts down the dwindling air supply — before passing through the airlock into a timewarp of slo-mo piano chords and anti-gravity funk. Todd Terje's mix, despite its similarities, may be even better — the groove is heavier, but parallel basslines effortlessly lift the tune sky-high, like kids playing fingertip levitation games.

PADDED ROOM
SIGNAL FAILURE/UNKNOWN ZONE
DC RECORDINGS 12"

After a brief foray into folky IDM with a recent Kelpe single, J Saul Kane's DC Recordings label heads back to the dancefloor with the debut single from Padded Room (Neil Beatnik and Bronx Dogs' Richard Sen). These two cuts mask disco's ecstatic grin behind a punkish sneer, and in keeping with the dark drama of Big Two Hundred and The Emperor Machine, they're awash with croaking synthesizers and pained guitars. But hovering above the drums, which bear the sinewy traces of their analogue sources, are shimmering heat lines of digital aliasing and faint effects, lending an eerie 'live-or-Memorex?' feel to the affair. "Signal Failure" worries away at a single, greasy bassline for what seems like forever, firing up a range of little rhythmic machines — a tightly syncopated cowbell figure, angry mosquito synths, overdriven keyboard lines — that fit together like clock cogs to push time forward. "Unknown Zone" is slower, bluesier and dubbier, setting the scene with the hazy nostalgia of a vintage punk-funk jam before bursting into relief with Frippertronic guitars and moon-rolling synthesizer solos that strain to break away from the track's mammoth gravity.

SCSI-9
ON THE EDGE
KOMPAKT 12"

SCSI-9's new track hovers in place, heart in throat, rosebud-coloured images of a happier past rushing towards a blood-red now. It's like Lawrence fondling an axe handle, and what makes it all the more unsettling is the irregular burp that rumbles through the mix, so understated it might be your own queasy stomach. "Señorita Tristeza" calls it a day after so much anguish and goes all sci-fi Morricone (with a touch of Thereminimal), but "Sweets & Love" goes back to the shagpile bedroom floor where a million teenage mixtapes have lain, woolly and matted with foolishness and tears. It's so absorbed you want to shake it, knowing better, but its uplift is irresistible. I once promised Michael Mayer I'd never use the word MicroGoth again, but if that's what he wants, he should stop putting out records like this.

ALEX SMOKE
SCHMINIMAL EP/ SCHWINGNUT
VAKANT 2X12"

While Alex Smoke's superb *Incommunicado* LP for Soma lingered lovingly on the dial between Depeche Mode and Sascha Funke, these two 12"s for Berlin's Vakant label squeeze through with just the blasts of static compressed into diamond-hard bits. Finding fellowship with hyperactive minimalists Dominik Eulberg and Trentemoller, Smoke peppers every bar with mica-thin beat flakes and suggests melodic movement with sub-bass and squeaks. In Schminimal's "Titti", a bobbing ostinato gives way to a syncopated Latin figure, and the expansive finale pumps away inside a skeleton of bitten nails. "TV Is The Pish" raps woodblocks against a convex surface bristling with buzz before plugging in a one-two tug of a bassline that shocks everything into a dirty Chicago groove; "Slippers And Slappers" isn't much different, but with a thumb permanently pressed against the remote's fast-forward button, with the pinky resting lazily over the mute. On "Schwingnut", complex delay patterns thumb-wrestle with dead-set hi-hats; their loss is our gain, as "Serious Like Plague" runs victory laps around all those tracks that ever thought an eight bar sequence was the only way to a dancer's heart. And the two B side tracks play with post-minimal, hyper-syncopated rhythms that sound like they come from 8D8 made of wood and with cotton for circuitry.

TIGA
YOU GONNA WANT ME
PIAS CD

Tiga's "You Gonna Want Me", co-produced by Soulwax and mixed by Jesper Dahlbäck, is pure, by-the-numbers electro-pop: garish bass bulge, anthemic verse/chorus structure, throwback handclaps and syn-toms, buildups and breakdowns in all the proper places. All of these elements, though, go out the window in Isolée's rework, which opens with the sound of machines breathing heavily and then launches into one of his trademark mutant electro-disco rhythms, lazy bass limping circles around a scissorhanded attack on the hi-hats. Tiga's vocals, liberated from their linear layout, go looping forward and back, all groaning *"Baby"* and falsetto *"Hello"* and not much more sense beyond that. *"It might be a different story"*, goes the refrain, and it sure as hell is, at least with Isolée behind the controls, summoning the soul of Wearemonster and bringing an otherwise inert body to devilish life.

ÜTZ FEATURING DUNLOK BACKSON
EARTH
META POLYP 12"

The producer behind this spongy ball of fuzz is the German crew Al Haca (here assuming the guise of Utz), whose 2DD2 track "Killa" anticipated The Bug's blasted dancehall, while the vocalist is allegedly a backpacker from the South Pacific who showed up at Al Haca's cottage studio deep in the forest, smoked up, spit fire and disappeared. The backstory's irrelevant; if hiphop made more room for gnomes in its pantheon of urban entrepreneurial heroes, the mossy bed of beats that cushion "Earth" — vinelike keys and eerie lights confounding with every step — could easily be rolled out over streets more accustomed to rubber-burning, if they'd stacked the cairns in a more syncopated zigzag, Al Haca's rabbit hole would lead straight to Dubstep's netherworld.

ANDY VAZ
LIVE IN DETROIT
PERSISTENCEBIT CD

Andy Vaz, proprietor of the Background and Soundvariation imprints, has been making and releasing ultra-minimal Techno for several years but oddly, this is his first album. *Live In Detroit* was recorded earlier this year in a live appearance at Detroit's Oslo club and post-produced back home in Düsseldorf. *Live In Detroit* divides its 68 minutes into 13 track markers, but it's difficult to determine where songs begin and end; instead, buzzy loops cycle over and over, catching like burrs in socks, picked up and re-deposited again and again along the trail. While his fellow minimalists have beefed up their sound, Vaz sticks to steadfastly micro proportions, shaving off his drums like iron filings and bathing them in the warm glow of virtual tubes. Unlike his "Soundvariation" singles, which favoured more abstracted rhythms ready to dissipate at a moment's notice, here he pays more attention to the groove. Maybe it had something to do with his Midwestern venue, because echoes of Moodymann and Theo Parrish reverberate deep in the mix. □

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

LLOYD MCTAGGART
YOU'RE BACK
WACKIES 12"

Rhythm & Sound's championing of Wackies has led to a great deal more exposure, and probably sales, than the label received in its truly 'underground' early 80s heyday – would that a few more modern artists indulged in similar payback activity. So here we have one of Wackies' earliest and most obscure 12" releases by the little known Lloyd McTaggart. Featuring the Love Joys on backing vocals and the persistent pinging of now vintage 70s synth percussion, this recording comes from the same period as the altogether more serious double sider combining the monumental Leroy Sibbles's "The Time Is Now", coupled with Stranger Cole's "Revolution", Bullwackies best single release. The lyric is typically flimsy, so turn to the dub for the real interest here, as the vocal side's funky brass section is put through the mangle and the jazzy pumping sax sets up the horn to get flash over a rhythm that's in a hurry to get somewhere fast

SUGAR MINOTT
THE ROOTS LOVER 1978-1983
MOLL SELEKTA CD/2XLP

In this time of maximal access to reggae's rich recorded legacy, the name of Lincoln 'Sugar' Minott does not appear often enough in the revival releases schedules, despite his playing a major role in the story of Jamaican music as a singer, songwriter, producer, label owner, sound system instigator and champion of youth talent. *The Roots Lover* is a collection of some of the singer's finest maxi singles with extended versions – only three tunes here, "Leggo The Dread", "Superstar" and "Three Wise Men", were originally released as 7" A and B sides. The drum based "Rome Rome", originally released as a 12" on the Black Roots label in 1980, demonstrates the incompatibility of Rasta beliefs with those of the Vatican. Elsewhere Minott deals with afro-centrism on "Africa", "African Girl" (a phased version of "Shank I Sheck") and "Careless Ethiopians". There are two Black Roots productions featuring Yabby You and DJ Ranking Dread, the apocalyptic vision of the former's "30 Pieces Of Silver" originally appeared as the flip to Willie Williams's "Come Make We Rally" and the toaster's "Superstar" on Sugar's "Hard Time Pressure" rhythm. Also present is Sugar in his DJ incarnation as Papa Honey recording with Sister Ester in 1981 on the lovers' tune "Waiting For You Love". All in all, an essential addition to Minott's available catalogue.

LEE PERRY
DUBSTRUMENTALS
TROJAN 2XCD

The direct follow-up to the Dub-Triptych set that attempted to trump Auralux's exemplary retrieval of dub's cornerstone, the mighty *Blackboard Jungle*, these two CDs pull together three albums of varying quality issued by Lee Perry in the mid 1970s. All three sets highlighted instrumental works with dub inflections and were only released in the UK in limited numbers. Today, the original vinyl copies are keenly sought in collectors markets, although there was a reissue of all the albums on a revived Justice League label in 1997. In 1975 the UK's DIP label release of *Kung-Fu Meets The Dragon* featured terrific sleeve art, with Scratch as afro'd disciple delivering a sole kick to the big snakehead. That's certainly still worth searching out, but the music inside is still just as impressive with The Upsetter getting as near to a demented Morricone as he dare. Spongey, minimal dubs with wit, tension and a taut energy measured in equal amounts, testament to the producer's dub divinity, especially "Fungaa" and the title track. Although the *Return Of Wax* set attempts to stretch the idea in true exploitation style, the same scam can't be run twice. Luckily, *Musical Bones* saves the day, as Perry's favourite boneman Vin Gordon, aka Don Drummond Jnr, delivers a series of classy jazzed dubs.

BRENDA RAY
WALATTA
TAMOKI WAMBESI CD

The cover photo has Brenda Ray in a pose between Pharoah Sanders's *Thembi* and Pablo's *East Of The River Nile* with melodica pointed towards the water, while the album was recorded "South of the River Mersey" at Naffi Studios Universal, lair of Sir Freddie Viadukt, aka the Minister of Noise. It's at this location that Tamoki Wambesi's Roy 'Royals' Cousins has had his master tapes spiked up for reissue, so its only right that another occupant of the studio, Brenda Ray, becomes 'Walatta', Ethiopian for 'first daughter' and therefore first female artist on the label. Brenda has Liverpool music credentials going way back, and her heart has always swayed between doo-wop and dub.

It is those influences that play out here in a mix of re-utilised rhythms and fresh beats. Old Tamoki Wambesi stalwarts Prince Far I and Knowledge make sampled guest appearances, contrasting with Brenda's breathy Chordettes meets Julee Cruise vocals. This is certainly the most unusual album to come out of Roy Cousins's stable and maybe one that has a more legitimate claim to attention than last year's ersatz roots affair from Sinead O'Connor.

THE ROYALS
1964–1981 SWEAT
TAMOKI WAMBESI CD

Roy Cousins has never been too retiring in his constant recycling of his back catalogue, usually built around The Royals' signature song, "Pick Up The Pieces", a true reggae classic. This new collection amounts to more than just another attempt to air that immortal tune. It features material going back to the group's inception in 1964, covering ska, rocksteady and reggae through producers Clement Dodd, Duke Reid, Winston Edwards, Joe Gibbs and Lloyd 'Matador' Daley, in addition to Cousin's own later productions. With early and obscure rocksteady undergoing a revival of late, this album hits the spot, especially with the sumptuous opener "We Are In The Mood" cut for Treasure Isle and the roasting hot "Save Mama", engineered by Andy Capp at Dynamics. But the original version of that anthem of positivity, "Pick Up The Pieces", overseen by Sylvan Morris at Studio One, turns out to be the equal of any Burning Spear track of the era; and there's a welcome bonus with the inclusion of the original version "Quarter Pound Of Ishen". The later rockers version is inevitably included from 1973, along with DJ takes from I-Roy on "Monkey Fashion" and Charlie Chaplin with "Tribute To Super Don".

THE RUTS
BABYLON'S BURNING RECONSTRUCTED: DUB DRENCHED SOUNDSCAPES
COLLISION CD

I always quite liked "Babylon's Burning", and its ominous warning about the perils of voting Tory in the UK, but like the revisiting of a loved one's grave, The Ruts seem forever condemned to return to their finest moment back in 1979. Not so much a one riddim album as a one lyric/one riff album, none of the remixers have a clue what's happening before their contribution or after, and like some sonic *Groundhog Day*, there's a mounting desperation to escape and an aching desire for poor Malcolm Owen to be released from this purgatory. Among the naively implicated are Rob Smith, Don Letts, Fundamental, Apollo 440, Dreadzone, Kid Loco, Groove Corp and Terminal Head. At least the nameless mastermind behind this hapless version hodgepodge senses the longing for relief the poor listener will be craving by the album's close – hence the blissful calm of the beatless closer by the almost aptly named Savanarola.

SALMONELLA DUB
REMIXES AND RADIO CUTS
DUB CONSPIRACY CD/DVD

Sometimes New Zealand is portrayed as caught in a 1950s time bubble, an idea that I have always found seductive. But maybe now the bubble has warped through to the 80s, for that's what it's like listening through to this collection of remixes and radio tracks from the Island's premier dub dance band. As the mixes come from Groove Corp, Dreadzone, Mad Professor, On U graduate David Harrow and Adnan Sherwood himself, it should come as no surprise that perhaps it's these artists' vintage pedigrees that are the most attractive aspect of this collection. The Salmonella Dub vocals are very much a minus factor, being almost incidental or embarrassingly worthy, naive, and devoid of wit, edge or wile.

THE SLACKERS
AN AFTERNOON IN DUB
ECHO BEACH CD

Don't let this one pass you by. Having been quietly released in Summer 2004, *An Afternoon In Dub* may have appealed exclusively to the cotene making up the group's small fan base outside New York City. However, this turns out to be perhaps the most cultured recent album of new dub, especially notable as this seven piece group are not a virtual studio outfit, but a living, breathing gigging machine. Taking the output from an after session jam ("reggae sushi") and a selection of their choicer previous material, the maturity borne of evolutions through punk, ska, swing, soul and reggae have resulted in an album of rare and distinct flavours. "Blues For Allan" and "The Glide" both decode the 'Stalag' bass genome, the former with splotched percussion and the latter dead-eye funk; "Uncle Pivo" is one of those annoying rhythms you can't quite figure (is it Studio One's "Full Up"?) garnished with supine horns, "Dub For Schooling" communes with the late Jackie Mittoo and "Make Me Smile Dub" will send you searching for the vocal version.

WANG LEI
XIN
EXPRESSILLON CD

Sichuan born musician Wang Lei is now relocated to Guangzhou City, in China's southern Guangdong Province, where he linked up with an ex-pat Swiss bassist and engineer to start China's first working reggae group, in a jolly West Coast festival stylee. As a solo musician of some pedigree, Wang also managed to develop a Sinobeat hybrid that veers between gruff Techno and a new strain of downbeat head-nodding electro noodlings, naively named dub 'n' bass, that proves a skank too far for the skills of most Chinese dancers.

This album originally appeared in Beijing on a pre-release about a year ago, since when, championed by ex-pat French promoters, Wang has toured France a couple of times, met up with HighTone and is on the point of releasing a collaboration with the Lyonnaise nudub rockers. There's lots of sampling of local ambience, instrumentation and so forth in here, but it's a case of buyer beware, as the leap from old-fashioned Techno in the industrial beat sense to dubbing it up may be too big a leap. Maybe the confrontation with the ruffer end of nu roots in HighTone will be enough to reveal the true nature of bass to this expeditionary from the East.

VARIOUS
STUDIO ONE WOMEN
SOUL JAZZ CD/2XLP

Heartbeat had the same idea about five years ago with *Keep On Jumping* but as they say in reggae, "If it's nice – do it twice!" – and there turns out to be only one duplication in Jennifer Lara's "Consider Me". In comparison, perhaps the Heartbeat set was a little rootsier than this new addition to the exemplary Soul Jazz Studio One series, which draws clear parallels between the soul queens of American R&B and their generally more uptempo, and therefore upful, Jamaican cousins. This is fairly pleasant listening for say, car radio or kitchen, but whack up the sound and it becomes monstrous. Marcia Griffiths and Rita Marley are featured with their first group The Soulettes on the rumbunctious "Deh Pon Deh"; Alton's sister, Hortense Ellis, answers her brother's smash hit "I'm Just A Guy" with "I'm Just A Girl". There are also four tunes from the sorely missed Jennifer Lara, plus the discovery of a rare groove pearl in Jerry Jones's "There's A Chance For Me". □

Electronica

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

MATT DAVIGNON
BWOO
EDGETONE CD

Over the last ten years or so, Matt Davignon has been developing an improvisational and refreshingly untutored approach to electronic music making. His surreptitiously evolving pieces float forth free from sampler grids and timecodes, twisting and turning through untrammelled space. It's tempting to describe his latest offering as an extended drum solo – tempting, but too flip to do this music justice. As often happens in art – from the Petrarch sonnet to the Lomo camera – creativity can often flower brilliantly through and around self-imposed restrictions. In this instance, the restriction is more daunting than most. *Bwoo* was composed and performed using just one instrument – a drum machine. Amazingly, this spartan approach yields expansive, multi-hued results – this is no kick/snare/hi-hat desert. Davignon coaxes a shifting, kaleidoscopic ecosystem from his chosen black box – from the slowly flourishing drones of "Pad" to the insectoid susurrations of "Flam Ratio", to the quivering, delicate feedback and staccato woodblocks of "96 Clocks". The title track is a coy succession of hesitant drones, while the closing "Init All" is stately, almost ceremonious; plucked, mournful chords summoned from some alien cloister to disintegrate gradually in our unfamiliar gravitational system.

MARCUS FJELLSTRÖM
EXERCISES IN ESTRANGEMENT
LAMPSE CD

This stark, etiolated and deliberately capricious music ghosts along the shadowy divide between electronica and modernist contemporary classical. Its Swedish creator is currently completing his postgraduate diploma in composition, and this CD – his first release – gathers together a number of brief pieces to form a survey of his work to date. The influence of Cage is apparent in the opening "Planchette", an electronically slurred, woozily pointillist slice of alien gamelan whose sudden, metallic surge six minutes in is as arresting as it is unexpected. Elsewhere, Fjellstrom offers the ultra-processed, dense and dynamically complex "Jeux", the eerily shivering strings of "Lev Poem", the febrile, almost cinematic melancholy of "Oil", and the slight, winsome tinkering of "Music For DX7", showcasing in the process a variety of approaches without ever quite laying claim to a signature style. Nonetheless, this is sonorous and haunting music whose deep, dark crevices yield plenty of textural surprises.

JASON FORREST
LADY FANTASY EP
SONIG CD

If last year's album – the sample-studded, high octane *Unrelenting Songs Of The 1979 Post Disco Crash* – suggested that Jason Forrest was a force of scattershot creativity, then this follow-up EP does little to dispel the impression. In fact, it goes further still. It's the work of a man on the brink of full-blown aesthetic schizophrenia. Having abandoned one alternative personality (Forrest previously recorded as Donna Summer), he's ushered a multiplicity of them into his music, and the four tracks included here have precious little in common with one another. Indeed, the opening piece ("The Work Ahead Of Us") has little in common with anything else that Forrest has recorded. It's a steadily swelling drone piece reminiscent of side two of Bowie's *Low*, with wordless, inscrutable vocals that trace the same mantric patterns as those on "Subterraneans". The title track shifts gears with disorientating rapidity, splicing a hoary Prog keyboard riff straight out of the King Crimson reject file to frenetic dayglo polyrhythms. And as the EP progresses it's hard to escape the conclusion that Forrest's devil-may-care approach is an impulsive, instant gratification end in itself rather than a considered artistic strategy. The final track "Sperry And Foil" shamelessly drops huge plundered lumps of Neu!'s "Isi" (from *Neu! 75*) into its twitchy, insubstantial flow – like the rest of *Lady Fantasy*, it raises a smile, but it doesn't strike deeper than that.

INCH-TIME
ANY COLOUR YOU LIKE
STATIC CARAVAN CD

In *Any Colour You Like*, Adelaide's close-knit but thriving electronic music scene has thrown up a luminous collection of music that deserves a wider hearing. This is the first album by Inch-time, aka Stefan Panczak, a doctor who divides his time between the A&E wards and his Logic set-up at home. Panczak is blessed with a marvellously unhurried sense of placement, and these pieces unfurl with an almost ceremonious poise. He clearly has a taste for oriental exotica – "Voyage To Brobdingnag" encompasses Japanese flutes and spare gamelan revolutions – but, crucially, these plangent textures are central to the compositions, rather than being mere spray-on atmosphere. "Kyoto" proves the point, counterpointing trembling pizzicatos with a wistfully circular arrangement for string quartet and calmly conjuring a richly melancholy atmosphere without the faintest hint of gimmickry. The beautiful presentation – each CD contains a hand-numbered woodblock print by the artist Roy Ananda – only adds to the appeal.

MICHAEL MANNING
PUBLIC
AI CD

Michael Manning is barely 20 years of age, but the opening track of his debut album hints at a musical maturity, not to mention a record collection, that goes far deeper than you have any right to expect. "Release", the track in question, is just a fluid, beatless intro piece – but its weightless clarity and full-frequency poise summons the spirit of mid-90s Detroit ("Deep Space"-era Model 500, Red Planet, prime Carl Craig) with unnerving ease. And Manning is no mere retro chancer. *Public* is littered with moments of jewelled inspiration, and characterised throughout by clean lines and a consistently appealing simplicity. The measured glockenspiel revolutions and sugary female voices of "Astral Poetry" and "Insect Potentiality" are preserved from cloying sweetness by an ominous undertow of static in the first instance, and by the sudden appearance of a tautly looped vocal snippet in the second. "Today" dubs up a stone classic breakbeat, gradually thickening in texture – and just when you think its going all ravey on you, fades gracefully away. It's one of many signs on *Public* that Manning has mastered the most crucial compositional rule of all: don't do anything dumb.

MINISTRY OF DEFIANCE
PRINCIPAE MATHEMATICAE
POST OFFICE CD

Post Office Records is one of those hybrid labours of love/monuments of dogged persistence that you can't help but admire. It's run by David Handford from an outpost in Northern Pembrokeshire to showcase his own music together with that of a few fellow travellers – since 2001, POR has mustered 15 rough-hewn yet invigorating releases. *Principae Mathematicae* is the third collection by Handford's Ministry Of Defiance alter ego and it's a brief, bracing collection of handmade textures helped along from time to time by nervy, skittering beats. Handford inhabits a determinedly post-Industrial landscape, and the influence of TG and the like is never entirely absent. But while bleak, the disc is never completely indigestible. Its compositions acknowledge, however subtly, that an act of creativity is never completely nihilistic, and even the rasping cybernetic breathing that underpins "Faraday's Folly" manages to draw the listener in. And the enmeshed, quivering organ of the final piece "Time Shaft" borders on the triumphant.

NUMBER NONE
URMERICA
REBIS CD

This shadowy duo from Chicago have made three previous releases, beginning with 2002's *Principles Of Sitting*, that have traced a sonic parabola from raw noise improvisations to gaseous, mournful ambience. *Urmerica* initially continues the trajectory. It is described as "a dowsing rod of the [American] national unconsciousness" made in the wake of Iraq and Bush's 2004 re-election, and if that sounds portentous, check out track one, called, with ponderous irony, "Suggestion For A New National Anthem". Luckily, it's an amazing piece of music, stretched out over nine aching, sombre, majestic minutes, rising and falling away, shot through with skeins of feedback, it's like vapourised essence of *Low*. Elsewhere, "Urmerica" is more oblique: stray fragments of found sound and disembodied field recordings wander into the mix, bringing with them a disquieting sense of non-specific alienation. □

16 unreleased tracks by : nlf3 trio+dominique petitgand / prohibition / patton / the berg sans nipple / wilfried* / nlf3 trio f.lor / don nino / heliogabale / soeza / purr / mendelson

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Hiphop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

AASIM
HIP HOP 101
AV8 12"

Remember when Portishead retossed "Apache" and put it out on a pink 45? The B side played that lost Axelrod card, a peripheral ghost town twitch with a bird cough guitar. So the bar clears out for the scoundrel's bassline and in walks Assim, a wordy character from Queens who was signed by P Diddlesticks, who was concerned that Bad Boy hadn't really threatened anyone since Biggie dimmed the hallways While a title like "Hip Hop 1D1" could only threaten you with boredom, Aasim gives the pink 45 a mean buzzard squint and says, *"Noncompliance is my science."* Like AZ, he has a breathless knack for run-on sibilants, making bullwhips from 's' sounds and bouncing words off the recoil.

BIG D/ULTRAMAGNETIC MCS
BACK AT IT THE ALBUM
PROMO CD

The CD says Ultramagnetic MCs but the four people on the cover are Ultramagnetic MCs Security And Road Management Then there's a photo of a latterday Rob Base on the inner jacket. Then you play it, hear lines like *"I piss on your waterbug collection"* and you figure you're sort of in the right spot, although it's a dark and bitter place where a Ced Gee beat is clean, of all things. Where DJ Moe Luv is rhyming (uh-oh) muzzle first and Tim Dog needs James Hetfield's therapist. Where Kool Keith threatens to sue the *"fish 'n' grits"* media for the Bellevue publicity. Where too many loved ones have died and there are no song titles or personnel credits, just TR Luv observing how *"the rap game is like a landfill full of anthills with ants beating up ants"*. Dr *"I come with my basket of plums, empty it out on stage and fill it back up with eardrums."* Who's talking about kayaking and folding reindeer? *"Y'all don't know about picking up worms and putting 'em on hooks!"* The beauty of Ultra was their being unaware of their weirdness, out to lunch and bringing bug leftovers home for dinner. But hearing them try to make radio hits by today's standards is just uncomfortably odd, especially considering their raw radio promo days with Red Alert.

CAGE
HELL'S WINTER
DEF JUX CD

The Iraq war's abhorrent effect on that country is bad enough, but the damage to political hiphop has been a little tragic, too. The greater the anger about the neo-con administration, the lesser the nuance to the lyrics. Although mocking heads of government may be tempting, too often it means we don't learn anything about the narrator himself. Perhaps this is unfair to Cage, whose lyrics deal with personal as much as political issues Yet when Jello Biafra crops up on *Hell's Winter* with a long and barely adequate George W Bush impression over funkless beats, it's difficult not to feel that this is hiphop drifted a long way from its core storytelling values Cage's own backstory has not been short of real-life drama, and his gallow's humour has a cutting edge: *"I tried a lot of drugs, I tried a lot of ladies* — some *I probably wouldn't have tried if I weren't on drugs."* Some of these asides — such as *"I feel like a loser 'cause I'm not in Fallujah"* — might have been better left as scribbles in the notebook, however *Hell's Winter* would stand up better if the production had more to offer, but almost every beat is like the steady, muscular trudge of trooping Marines. The tantalisingly claustrophobic intros are made meaningless as soon as the beats roll in, like the National Guard appearing at the coda of a cheap zombie flick There are some signs of life — Camu Tao's grimy, grainy production resurrects "The Death Of Chris Palko" and "Public Property" — but with countless co-productions and guest MCs, Cage's second album lacks an auteur touch that might have given it the required direction *(Derek Walmsley)*

EGYPTIAN LOVER
DANCE
EGYPTIAN EMPIRE 12"

Originating in the foothills of North Carolina's Rutherford County, the 'stuck-on-a-hill' move is an invisible gear shift, poplock's slow cousin Right hand treads neutral, foot mashes air and the clutch cries raw eggs. I never fully understood it until stalling out on steep grade next to the Calvary church in Charlotte while blasting Egyptian Lover's "Dance" as the guy behind me lip-synched blasphemy about my mother or, more likely, cursed me for listening to a Vocoder record with a neon pink and purple sleeve when KRS-One's *Criminal Minded* is in stores. Egyptian Lover, aka Greg Broussard, was still spraying cheap Prince cologne long and taking fishnet walks by the Nile years after West Coast understudies like Dr Dre began starching khakis and picking up FBI groupies Still, Egypt was once LA's foremost DJ, teaching Jam Master Jay how to do his legendary "RUN-RUN" scratch, opening sets by manually playing "Planet Rock" backwards and generally pissing off every boyfriend in the building "Dance" is Egypt's best and neurosurgeons would say it has mad Extra Pyramidal Symptoms This is not your 'run of the mummy' electro. The keyboards swell with the low-riding winter sky and the electro pulse dial tap is run through a conch shell, the crushed dye of which, while not as club pink as Egypt's cover art, is used to preserve ancient pharaoh gauze — no kidding

JAY DEE
DONUTS
STONE'S THROW CD/LP

A donut is what a bored car does in an empty grocery store parking lot. A donut is what I was caught stealing from a grocery store in fifth grade and a donut is the inflatable cushion I needed after mom whooped my tail in the parking lot A donut is a loop which brings us full backswing arc to Jay Dee's "One For Ghost" and its squeaky kid recall: *"Took me across the lap, she whipped me with a strap when I was bad."* Vocals sped up are a rewind to balloon parties, before voices changed, life got complicated and Forest Sylvers realised he couldn't be Michael Jackson There's too much lovesick soul on here for these 31(!) tracks to be called instrumentals This is career salvation for whomever you imagine, as if Donuts had been mislabelled on the disc intended for next year's five best rap albums. The strings from "One Eleven" put you, the soggy cigarette, and the bottle sitting on the kitchen table, left wailing with nothing but Smokey Robinson's cousin and a memory — after she took all the plants and left the door hanging. Dionne Warwick makes you regret it more ("You're Gonna Need Me") and Eddie Kendrick inhales the goofer dust and takes his word backwards, hanging on while the drumhead becomes a meniscus whine The Trammps are still riding high off that Game song ("Hate It Or Love It"), but Dilla gives them another look, fuzzy mallet to vibes, from the beginning of "Rubberband" Then there's the skunk-bearded Wolfman Jack, frogging up a psych rock Bee Gees cover, which, like a lot of these tracks, was made from a hospital bed when Jay Dee was tubed up in ICU

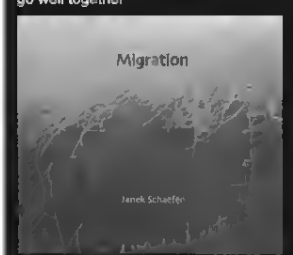
KEAK DA SNEAK FEATURING TURF TALK & DJ SHADOW
3 FREAKS
PROMO 12"

Keak Da Sneak is either channeling Rick Aviles in *Cannonball Run* or he's had his larynx excised and mailed to some Frog in some hollow who's swapped him a Toadcoder for some lizard skin flipflops. *"If you don't know what I said, it don't matter just don't bite."* I want to hear Turf Talk say purpentine. He yells, *"Man we need freaks. The party's in the parking lot."* Imagine the wolfen band instructor yelling at his brasses. *"TurfTalkand KeakDasNEAK!"* (In a Matuzak super-growl.) Make it go like that. Epaulets melt Tuba player faints Band loses job to keyboard Bass squishes Astro Turf Hyphy goes halfrime Oscar Veech busts in the locker room and says, "What in the goddamn goat-shit hell is the game you people are playing?" The Bay needs a rapper named Sistrunk Duet with Turf Talk called Astro Turf?

KROWN RULERS
PAPER CHASE
TRAFFIC CD

Never question a rapper from East Camden, New Jersey, who wears a crooked knight lid and claims to be enforced by bass. Named Grand Poobah, aka Lord-High-Everything-Else, the guy you saw on a mead binge at the Camelot weekender, waving a crossbow and yelling "kick the ball". But Poobah has poise He knows one man's mace is another man's Glyptodont tail He'll execute your documents, stick the quill through his headphones and name a song "Confetti Emcees" This is medieval age hiphop with beats smelted by Dave from Tuff Crew aka LA Kidd Credits thank Beepers In Code and one Fusty But what does Poobah mean by *"in North Cakalak it was the B-Boy lust"*? And why does the crown logo look like a tree toad foot? And only a blind man's ears could distinguish the two remixes of "Kick The Ball". A live version has been discovered, in which Lord-High-Everything-Else rips through sour boos and the host says, "Jewel T to the stage." □

SAME ACTOR
sharp edges [bleep 30]
"Sharp Edges" uses stringed instruments (guitar, sitar and dulcimer) microphones and computers to create melodies, and a music that is alive and perfectly demonstrating that digital and analogic go well together



JANEK SCHAEFFER
migration [bleep 31]
The new studio album by one of the most individual composers working in the field of sound art, who has released albums with Fat Cat, Asphodel, [K-raa-K]3, Audiosphere and runs audiOh! Recordings "A delightful and cathartic experience for the discerning listener One of Janek's most engaging and accessible albums " [Tarramotto, New York]

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Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Brian Morton

MICHAEL BISIO QUARTET
CONNECTIONS
CIMP CD

AVRAM FEFER & MICHAEL BISIO
PAINTING BREATH, STOKING FIRE
CIMP CD

There's a moment of drama on *Connections* at the end of "Basic Deconstruction", which ends with the sound of Mike Bisio's bass falling apart. They rebuilt the thing on the spot in the Spirit Room at Rossie, another fnsson to the place. Knowing that lends the softly thrummed opening to "History Of A Mystery" a more than anecdotal drama. You hear Bisio slowly building the dynamics until once again he's pounding at the strings with his usual abandon. Saxophonists Stephen Gauci (on tenor throughout) and Avram Fefer (who totes a pretty full bag) blare in relief. I don't hear the 'Third Stream' similarities producer Bob Rusch claims to find in these cuts. They're never that chill and formal and on John Coltrane's "Drum Thing", a duet with CIMP veteran Jay Rosen, there are hints of a more realistic lineage. The set ends with a couple of extra duets with Fefer, from the sessions that yielded the duo record. I'd say Bisio got the best of it for his quartet record, but "Love (Keepin' On)" and its medley partner "Rio Largo y Sinuoso" are worth the ticket.

ANTHONY BRAXTON
QUINTET (LONDON) 2004
LEO CD

This is Braxton's 2004 Royal Festival Hall appearance with the new young group, but now you can hear what everyone is doing. Just shy of half an hour into the first part of "Composition 343", Braxton plays some of the most delicate and beautiful saxophone of his career. Trumpeter Taylor Ho Bynum responds with a chattery, vocalised solo. Bassist Chris Dahlgren gets the works of a music box onto his bridge. Stunning. The other members of the group, guitarist Mary Halvorson and percussionist Satoshi Takeishi, play with such quiet authority you begin to think this must be the most effective Braxton group since the Crispell/Dresser/Hemingway quartet of the 80s. But it's the boss who makes it, less professional this time, and far more nakedly expressive.

TAYLOR HO BYNUM & SPIDER MONKEY STRINGS
OTHER STORIES (THREE SUITES)
482 MUSIC CD

Cornettist with the current Anthony Braxton group (see above), Bynum also emerges as a formidable composer with these sharply contrasting multiparters. "Supo Eno" sounds rigorous and through-composed, with a lot of emphasis on Joseph Daley's tuba and the leader's mournful, full-voiced horn. "The First Three Lives Of Stuart Hornsley" is tiny by comparison, three miniatures for cornet, strings (largely played pizz) and guitar. Written for Leigh Dana Jackson's film, it has a quiet, almost classical deportment that perfectly underscores Bynum's Miles-tinged cornet. "Spider Monkey Stories" starts with the leader out on his own but gradually reveals a jazzier side than the other two pieces, with passages of heavy ostinato and, on "Chuck", a drum solo and heavy guitar part. Beautiful music and challenging throughout.

CURTIS CLARK
DREAMS DEFERRED
NIMBUS WEST CD

The Angelino pianist exiled himself to the Netherlands in the 1970s and has maintained a quiet presence there. This is his sixth Nimbus release, a combination of live trio recordings, an all-Monk set, from the same venue as 19BB's *Live At The Bimhuis*, and a set of studio originals for septet. The latter has nothing quite as distinctive as Clark's one repertory piece "A Letter To South Africa", but it reprises the staccato line of "Sean", presumably a dedication to saxophonist Sean Bergin, who's present on those dates in a role previously taken by John Tchicai and Andy Sheppard. That choice of personnel may suggest something of Clark's jack-of-all-trades approach, which draws on Red Garland and Herbie Nichols and never quite settles into anything distinctive. The larger group – with Tobias Delius on second tenor, Felicity Provan on trumpet and Tristan Honsinger cello, as well as trio section with Wayne Dockery on bass and Louis Moholo on drums – coaxes some fine playing from the leader, but the trio cuts are under-powered and oddly predictable.

THE CLAUDIA QUINTET
SEMI-FORMAL
CUNEIFORM CD

What maybe looks like a fun side project has done saxophonist Chris Speed, guitarist/accordionist Ted Reichman, vibist Matt Moral, bassist/guitarist Drew Gress and drummer/keys/composer John Hollenbeck no harm at all, pulling down lots of admiring press. It's music that, in keeping with Cuneiform's devotion to jazz rock and other uncategorisable forms, breaks down boundaries. Lots of clever stuff and a leaven of humour – not least Gress's phoned-in apology on "Drewslate" – makes it an appealing set, and on "They point... glance... whisper... then snicker" genuinely thought-provoking. But, a mystery: it's the *Claudia* Quintet, they play a passionate hymn to "Susan" and Hollenbeck proposes to a Kate on the cover. What gives? Did she say yes? I need to know.

KAHIL EL'ZABAR'S RITUAL TRIO & BILLY BANG
LIVE AT THE RIVER EAST ART CENTER
DELMARK CD/DVD

Cynics sometimes say that a Ritual Trio album is as good as the guest star, Bang is regular enough to be considered the fourth leg, but David Murray, Pharoah Sanders, and Archie Shepp have all featured on RT records. Truth be told, not only is El'Zabar one of the overlooked heroes of Chicago jazz (trivia buffs will be pleased to know he also played with and designed frocks for Nina Simone), but so too is saxophonist Ari Brown, a player of controlled fire coming from somewhere between Gene Ammons and the current crop of hyped-up pyromaniacs. Bassist Yosef Ben Israel might have been expected to feature on the opening tribute to Malachi Favors ("Big M" also lends its name to an upcoming tribute album) but it's El'Zabar's kalimba that dominates. The bassist gets his Jimmy Garrison moment at the start of "Return of The Lost Tribe", reprised from a Bright Moments CD of that name. Bang walls away, a deft quarter-tone out on the unisons; El'Zabar shifts to drums and tightens up the metre. It's great stuff, with lots of crowd buzz, and the DVD option puts you right there.

THEO JORGENSMANN
FELLOWSHIP
HATOLOGY CD

Recorded live in 1998, but it might have come from any time in the previous 30 years, the clarinettist's line-up has a faintly nostalgic look, with vibist/pianist Karl Berger, bassist Kent Carter, alto saxophonist Charlie Mariano on the roster alongside the younger Lithuanian Petras Vysniauskas on soprano and regular drummer Klaus Kugel. The three long pieces are freebop of an endearingly old fashioned sort, richly textured, never too scary and often almost casually melodic. A better showing from Jorgensmann than his earlier *To Ornette: Hybrid Intensity* on the same label.

DAVID LIEBMAN
THE DISTANCE RUNNER
HATOLOGY CD

The most intelligent saxophonist in contemporary jazz, Liebman has recorded a handful of solo records but had never before given an unaccompanied concert until this August 2004 Willisau appearance. Some of the pieces refer to earlier work. "The Loneliness Of A Long Distance Runner" is here dedicated to the memory of Steve Lacy, "Colors" and "The Tree", both subdivided, refer to his solo output. He picked up the tenor again in the 1990s and it resonates here splendidly, different to his soprano playing, but similarly clear through the range and vibratoless. He brings a similar quality to wood flute. The concert wasn't entirely unaccompanied. On "Time Immemorial", he's backed by an overdub of himself playing four saxophones. There are a couple of canonical pieces as well: a delightful "Petite Fleur" in presumed tribute to Bechet, and Coltrane's "Peace On Earth", a reminder of the epiphany that turned the young Tristano pupil into the most thoughtful of 'free' players.

PAGO LIBRE
STEPPING OUT
LEO CD

Hard to judge whether this fine group, now of more than a decade's standing, evolves or simply gets better at its Eurofolky/classical/minimalist/swing thing. New bass player Georg Breinschmid doesn't make much of an impact as a composer, but he more than fills Daniele Patumi's shoes. As ever, it's horn player Arkady Shilkloper (the long "Intrada" and "Alpine Sketch") and the irrepressible John Wolf Brennan (the opening "W 9th Street" and "Heptao") who dominate the writing.

PAX TRIO
TRIPTYCH
EXIT CD

Former Rip, Rip & Panic men Mark Springer and David Wright join forces with tabla master Pandit Dinesh for another low-key excursion. Springer has a substantial catalogue on Exit, including string quartets and solo piano, and this has the same unemphatic quality, too thoughtful to be dismissed as self-indulgent, too quiet to be heard above the current hubbub.

RARA ENSEMBLE
ORAI
RARA/ZREC CD

ALBERTA BRAIDA
OUED
RARA/ZREC CD

ALBERTA BRAIDA & GIANCARLO LOCATELLI
DUE
RARA/ZREC CD

Fronted by clarinettist Giancarlo Locatelli, Rara plays free jazz of a reassuringly old-fashioned sort, built out of parallel melody lines, staccato chording from pianist Albert Braida and an open, but not unswinging pulse from bassist Gianfranco Tedeschi and drummer Fabrizio Spera. On "Turn", they lock into ideas which might become tedious if they weren't so brilliantly controlled and concentrated. Only the long, opening "Antehac" sounds like it was being workshopped. These are guys who either know each others' moves or who came to an immediate creative understanding. Braida's solo record is bitty and unformed, but the duos with Locatelli (particularly "Canis Aureus 2" for piano and bass clarinet) are stunningly good.

HORACE TAPSCOTT
THE TAPSCOTT SESSIONS VOLUME 10
NIMBUS WEST CD

Apart from The *Dark Tree* on hatART and his work on Sonny Criss's 1968 *Sonny's Dream*, the West Coast piano master is still not widely known outside California, where he devoted himself to musical education and to running The Union Of God's Musicians And Artists Ascension, and later The Pan-African People's Arkestra. This ongoing series is valuable archaeology but woefully unannotated, and but for the useful information that the music was taped at more than one session, no dates or places. The opening "Miguel" has a sonorous quality that suggests a blue-toned passage in a Beethoven sonata. "Roses In Bloom" and the long "First Love" are predictably gentler, "Ballad For Samuel" is full of trademark rolled chords. At 15 minutes, "Maya And Me" is a masterly statement, touching on stride and reminiscent in places of Mal Waldron's brooding live performances. Horace died in 1999 after a final, all too brief flurry of activity on the Arabesque label. Time this series was cleaned up and issued with adequate notes. Nimbus have an archive of modern jazz piano, and for the moment doing not much more than sitting on it. □

Innova Recordings:
What's Going On

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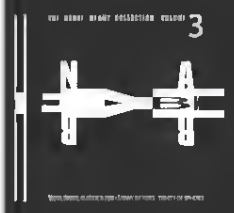

The Henry Brant Collection, Vol. 3

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John Belcher: The Sound According to John

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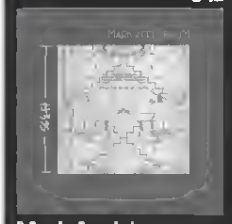

Mark Applebaum: 56 1/2 ft.

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Modern Composition

Reviewed by Philip Clark

JEAN-LOUIS AGOBET
ORCHESTRAL WORKS
TIMPANI CD

Like John Adams, French composer Jean-Louis Agobet has magpie tendencies, although his reference points are quite different. Agobet, now in his mid-thirties, is rooted in a post-Xenakis and Ligeti soundworld, with strong inflections of Spectral harmony via his appreciation of Murail and Dusapin. If the music has a lack, it's a tendency to play up to expectations of what 'contemporary music' should be, but there's much to enjoy about this new release nonetheless. *Génération* (2002) is a vibrant score for three clarinettists and orchestra, a modern day reinvention of the 17th century Concerto Grosso, which pitches Michel Portal, Paul Meyer and Alain Billard against a hectic orchestral metropolis. *Ritratto Concertante* (2000) playfully prods familiar tonal cliches into an alien context, and the disc is completed with the beefy orchestral *Phonal* and a cello and orchestra 'grand duo'.

CLAUDE LOYOLA ALLGÉN
STRING QUARTET NO 2
NOSAG CD

File under 'historical curiosity'. Claude Loyola Allgén was born in Calcutta in 1920, but grew up in Stockholm. He composed pieces of such complexity and extraordinary length (his *String Trio* lasts for two hours) that he was written off as a freak of nature during his lifetime, but this live recording of his *Second String Quartet* (1942) suggests he ought to have been taken more seriously. The quartet is a transcription of the orchestral parts to an operatic version of *Falstaff* (the notes don't make clear whether Verdi's or Allgén's own), which find themselves wrenched into bizarre shapes and ear-stretching juxtapositions. Allgén ended his days living in poverty in a tiny house in Stockholm without heat or electricity. He died in a house blaze in 1990 after the candles he used for light set fire to his furniture. Most of his manuscripts were destroyed too, including an unfinished *Violin Concerto* that some reports suggest was already five hours long.

GEORGES APERGHIS
AVIS DE TEMPÊTE
CYRES CD

How could a piece be more intriguing than this? Georges Aperghis's *Avis De Tempête* (*Storm Warning*) is state-of-the-art music theatre, with the traditional relationship between music and text given unheralded edge through electronic manipulation and random processes. The subject of the work has its beginnings in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and also references *Moby Dick* and *The Lightning-Rod Man*, all allegories for forces of nature mirroring an internal mental storm. This mental dysfunction is reflected in samples of text that have been spliced up using William S Burroughs's cut-up technique and then treated digitally, so fragmentary speech becomes transformed into abstract sound. Aperghis sculpts this information overload into a work with intense momentum, where words and music — and instruments and electronics — become subsumed into an inscrutable matrix.

CHRISTOPHER FOX
A GLIMPSE OF SION'S GLORY
NMC CD

Christopher Fox has taught composition at Huddersfield University for 11 years, and is one of few composers to have fruitfully made minimalist impulses fuse with the techniques of European modernism. The major work here is the Allen Ginsberg-inspired *American Choruses*, which shifts from Ivesian hymnal harmonies to the complete disintegration of Ginsberg's texts into randomly generated choral textures. Fox admits that the piece is not based on "traditions that inspired Ginsberg", but contextualising Ginsberg within the wider tradition of American experimentalism is a bold move that has paid off. The solo organ of *The Missoun Harmony* commandeers harmonies from Shaker hymns and reflects Fox's interest in early Philip Glass, while other works explore his fascination for the revolutionary zeal of mid-17th century English history. Punchy performances from English choral group EXAUDI under James Weeks.

HANS WERNER HENZE
ROYAL WINTER MUSIC
STRADIVARIUS CD

Hans Werner Henze has always had an affinity for the guitar, and the two sonatas based on characters from Shakespeare that form his *Royal Winter Music* (1975-79) combine into the longest stretch of music he's written for the instrument. Like the best of Henze's music, the pieces are rigorously composed, with an instinctive sensibility for fluidity and drama. The opening section, "Gloucester", is based around the vocal contours of the famous "Now is the winter of our discontent" speech, which Henze evolves into a testy exploration of *Richard III*'s conflicting themes. The action then bounds through *The Tempest*, *Romeo And Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream*, some pieces breathlessly dramatic while others are more sedate soliloquies. The work's dedicatee, Julian Bream, apparently objected to the technical demands of the final section, *Mad Lady Macbeth*, but here David Tanenbaum plays with effortless authority.

HILDA PAREDES
LISTEN HOW THEY TALK
MODE CD

The Arditti Quartet, Ian Pace (piano), The Ensemble Modern and Neue Vokalsolisten Stuttgart are the all-star cast assembled for this disc of chamber music by Mexican born, London resident composer Hilda Paredes. Both her string quartet *Uy U Tan* (1998) and piano quintet *Cotidales* (2001) have rather geeky surfaces, leaning heavily on Xenakis-like glissandi and pseudo-Lachenmann noise, and sometimes veering awkwardly towards trainspotter patterning. But when Paredes's ear properly engages, her imaginative sense of texture can create compelling results, like the subtle shifts in the opening of the piano quintet from whispery bowing to mechanical plucking. *Can Silim Tun* (1999) for voices and string quartet has ritualistic power, but larger forces in the ensemble piece *Ah Paaxo'ob* (2001) apes Paredes's propensity to note spin.

GEORGE ROCHBERG
SYMPHONY NO 2/IMAGO MUNDI
NAXOS CD

George Rochberg died in 2005 after spending a career deliberately blurring the edges between modernism and post-modernism. This made him unpredictable and endlessly stimulating, even if he became a hate figure for the sort of composers one normally admires. His *Symphony No 2* (1955-56) is marked in the history books as the first 12-tone American symphony, written when Elliott Carter and Roger Sessions were still MOR Copland clones. It's an epic 30 minute structure, characterised by angsty, zig-zagging, atonal lines and instrumental writing that pushes at the orchestral frame. It can sound a bit of a period piece in places and is positively Old School when put next to Varèse, but remains historically significant and curiously vital. *Imago Mundi* (1973) is typical of Rochberg's later mind games — a piece inspired by a visit to Japan suddenly chews on Shostakovich licks and bits of *The Rite Of Spring* without explanation.

RUTH CRAWFORD SEEGER
A CONTINUUM PORTRAIT
NAXOS CD

Ruth Crawford Seeger — the matriarch of the family that produced Pete and Peggy Seeger — was also a pioneering American experimental composer, roughly contemporary with Charles Ives and Henry Cowell. The most famous piece here is her solo piano *Study In Mixed Accents* (1930) which aims to keep separate lines dissonantly marching forward by cross-cutting them with rhythmic accents that upsets traditional resolutions. Pianist Cheryl Seltzer keeps the piece on the boil, suggesting Crawford Seeger's concepts anticipated Ligeti's *Etudes*. Other works include deliciously dissonant studies for solo flute, cello and bassoon, while three settings of poems by Carl Sandburg make operatic mania and instinctive modernism gel.

WALTER ZIMMERMANN
THE ECHOING GREEN
MODE CD

Walter Zimmermann has effectively x'ed himself out of prevailing trends in German contemporary music through his allegiance to Cage and Feldman. *The Echoing Green* for violin and piano (1989) and *Lied Im Wüstenvogelton* for bass flute and piano (1987) both have slowly evolving surfaces, but Zimmermann's sense of line and his ultra dry whimsy suggest he's long since distilled those aesthetic starting points. *Wüstenwanderung* (1986) for solo piano packs in as many lines as Zimmermann can get away with, until the pianist is dealing with an information overload; *Geduld Und Gelegenheit* (1987-89) is a characteristically taut set of miniatures for cello and piano. This is music of transcendent clarity, wit and driving purpose. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Keith Moliné

THOMAS BUCKNER
CONTEXTS
MUTABLE CD

New music baritone singer Buckner presents a programme of three improvisations (one solo and two duets) and an ensemble performance of Earl Howard's *ILEX*. The solo piece has a lovely gripping drama to it, a calm focus that often suggests medieval plainsong. The duets, featuring cellist David Darling and pianist Borah Bergman, are less successful. Although Buckner's original inspiration was The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, whose Roscoe Mitchell is a regular performing partner, there's something stiff and plummy about his work on these pieces, not helped by leaden accompaniment from his collaborators. The Earl Howard piece, however, a balance of improvisation and composition, is excellent. Howard himself presides over the electronics, treating and warping Gustavo Aguilar's percussion and Wu Man's pipa, and the dense, often very beautiful results inspire Buckner to an exciting and perfectly judged performance.

WALTER & HORACE CARDEW/ STEPHEN MOORE
CHIOMA SINGS TALES OF DANNY DARK
HCA CD

A vibrant mixture of avant-rock, modern composition, jazz and experimental electronica, this mysterious album has been circulating for a while now and deserves to be heard. Put together by Walter and Horace Cardew (sons of Cornelius), and featuring the instrumental input of various ex-Loose Tubes and Billy Jenkins alumni, it interleaves electronic textures, treated vocals and thorny, angular composition that is strongly reminiscent of Art Bears around the time of *Hopes And Fears*. The album also includes material created in workshops for young people, and fantastically morose lyrics by Moore, transmitted through the heavily treated voice of Laura Pooley, who sounds like a ringer for Dagmar Krause in places. The fact that it's clearly taken a superhuman act of will to bolt all this disparate material together is what gives the album its strange, edgy charm. Walter Cardew's abrasive sheets of guitar and brother Horace's dry, insinuating tenor sax are the dominant voices on this powerful album.

CAMILLA HANNAN
MORE SONGS ABOUT FACTORIES
CAJID MEDIA CD

THEMBI SODDELL
INSTANCE
CAJID MEDIA CD

Two unfussy releases on this new Australian sound art label. Hannan's debut is a five part piece comprising heavily processed location recordings of industrial sites. Churning mechanised repetition is the order of the day, Hannan diving deep into her source material. Whether the album represents a celebration or a critique of the machine, or perhaps even a valedictory essay on post-industrial decay, is anyone's guess. But it sounds good, as does Soddell's second release on the label. Its long stretches of near-silence are interrupted by thick bursts of noise whose provenance in field recordings is certainly easier to fathom than the cello and guitar also listed as sound sources on the sleeve. The massive dynamic range of the album makes for distinctly uneasy listening. The work of Ilios comes to mind, but Soddell's work is more colourful, less unremittingly grey and austere.

THE HAT CITY INTUITIVE
NARROW MISS ON THE CHAMBER POT
HAT CITY SOUNDS CD

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HAT CITY SOUNDS CD

I wish this Virginia/NYC Improv collective were as much fun as they clearly think they are. Peek behind the great group name, some equally promising track titles ("Snot Boutonniere" being my personal favourite) and the initial cheerful bluster they kick up, and frankly there's little else there. Their music isn't bad, and it's at least spirited, but they never seem to coalesce as a unit for long enough to pack their undoubted energy into anything resembling a punch. Neither are there any particularly strong individual instrumental voices that might take the music by the scruff of the neck and drag it somewhere interesting. "Blather, Wince, Repeat" from *Narrow Miss* . pretty much sums up the Hat City experience, from its apt title to the good-natured but pointless mess of ill-focused horns, percussion and guitar that constitutes its musical substance. I fear that HCI won't get close to fulfilling their potential until they stop enjoying themselves so much.

TOMAS KORBER
EFFACEMENT
CUT CD

Korber is a Swiss/Spanish guitarist and laptopper whose bio indicates that he has worked with Keith Rowe, Otomo Yoshihide and, basically, everybody else. *Effacement* is a mammoth work that builds from a frosting of lowercase electronics to dense, rolling waves of static and machine noise, and then recedes back to near-silence before gaining mass again. Korber likes piling on the intensity and then cutting abruptly to a more becalmed sonic vista, whose surface calm nevertheless contains the seeds of something darker that he can then work towards in the next section. Passages where the guitar is most obviously the source instrument alternate with sections of shortwave interference, sub-bass hum and needles of feedback, but the way these passages overlap, as if each section is scrubbing the preceding one clean, perhaps explains the album title. Korber's care with the architecture of the album is what sets it apart.

KOTRA & ZAVOLOKA
UNTITLED LIVE
NEXSOUND CD

The first release in Nexsound's new Live Reports series, this sees two of the Ukrainian label's regulars in an improvised live jam recorded in Kiev. It's far more relaxed than their solo releases and even sees them dabbling with Techno and folktronica amid the splutters and whines of their more familiar binary mangling. Strange how things have come so far that the raw sound of a flute or a voice can seem more startling, more worthy of comment than any amount of laptop glitchscaping.

While it lacks the lightness of touch that Katja Zavoloka in particular demonstrated on 2005's excellent *Suspenzia* album, there's a sense of fun and spontaneity to the music that is quite addictive. As is often the case with head-to-head Improv showdowns, it's less a through-structured whole than a series of unconnected moments, but they're good moments. Nexsound maintain their extraordinary strike rate of great releases, and the Kool Kiev scene is evidently in rude health.

LONDON ELECTRIC GUITAR ORCHESTRA
STICKS AND STONES
2.13 CD

Including in their ranks such guitar and non-guitar luminaries as Jem Finer and Viv Corringham, LEGO have been active for a decade. This 19 minute distillation of the work they have been engaged in for the last few years under the directorship of John Bissett is an enjoyable document of both scored and improvised music.

With the orchestra preparing their instruments in the classic English tradition of guitar abuse (that is, they use knitting needles rather than screwdrivers), the three pieces here are far closer to Fred Frith's wirey guitar quartet than Glenn Branca's thunderous super ensemble. The sticks and stones of the title relate respectively to sounds with sharp attack and sounds with long decay. The result is richly textured, well-directed music, simple and extremely effective.

MERZBOW
SENMAIDA
BLOSSOMING NOISE CD

Co-sponsored by animal rights charity PETA, sporting a title that translates as *1000 Paddy Fields* and cover art (by Val Oenham) of role-reversed vivisection involving a cartoon rabbit and an understandably anguished human guinea pig, Masami Akita's new album might initially seem to be the first fruits of a new, caring sharing Merzbow, urging us to eat more rice and fewer animals.

It starts almost as Merzbow on 45, with a plodding machine rhythm underpinning some of his more user-friendly noisebursts. But inevitably, the noise thickens and grows teeth, smothering the beats in layers of pure electronic malevolence. The three pieces, or "Tracts", that comprise the album all follow the same template, functional beats ripped apart by all the sonic furies Akita conjures from his equipment. The sound of bleating sheep is a surreal addition to the molten noisescape of "Tract 3", but that apart, *Senmaida* is carnage as usual.

WILL MONTGOMERY
WATER BLINKS
SELVAGEFLAME CD

The first release on electronic musician and *Wire* writer Montgomery's own label, *Water Blinks* is an assured and enjoyable collection of low-key experiments with rhythm and texture. "Lapsana" sees him encamped in early Pan Sonic territory, allowing two simple pulses to wind in and out of phase with each other. "Yarrow" focuses on a gently radiant drone, sourced perhaps from a French horn.

The album as a whole more or less alternates between these two approaches, though with certain pieces restricted to a single idea and other longer tracks housing a succession of them, it's difficult to get a sense of any overarching structure. That one reservation aside, this is careful music that reveals its detail with attentive listening, particularly in the higher frequency range, where delicate, softly piercing tones dance around the stereo spectrum.

POINTUS PIRATUS
BLOOD IS THE OCEAN
LETZTON CD-R

Three ocean-deep tone poems make up this 18-minute offering from Oslo collective Pointus Piratus. Seeking to evoke through music the tides and currents, pleasures and perils of the big blue is hardly a novel concept, but here it's managed with great skill and simplicity, and very little recourse to obvious figurative effects — seagulls and lapping waves making only the briefest and most discreet of appearances. If, on "Safe Haven", the becalmed Rhodes chords and processed guitar (recalling the gently fractured stillness of Joseph Suchy's playing) represent a picture postcard coastal idyll, "Sea Study" is its opposite, a depiction of the oceanic menace that constantly threatens it. The track is built on an irritable, unstable synth line, which suggests at various points blaring foghorns, busy sonar activity and sudden angry gusts of wind. Its dark rhythms are swathed in delays that focus the beats into impacted surges of sound, like waves crashing against sea walls.

STARVING WEIRDOS
STARVING WEIRDOS
ATHIESTAREGODS CD-R

Fascinating drone/Improv madness from this impossibly obscure Californian combo, with echoes of the backwoods psychedelia of the freer end of the free folk scene and the no-fi wilfulness of The Dead C. The group strike a perfect balance between drift and purpose, sprawl and discipline, noise and non-noise. The results are rough but quite gorgeously radiant. "Plastic Gagaku" envelops an irregular percussive snap, shifting lines of feedback and interjections from plastic toys in a dense fog of reverb. The 20 minute "Friday the 13th Pt II" moves dreamily through a series of vaguely narcotic atmospheres, but with great conviction. There are sections that sound rather like gamelan metallophones played through old 60s fuzzboxes, and if that doesn't pique your interest, nothing will. □

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed

Don't expect a slide-rule: Iannis Xenakis

XENAKIS
NOURITZA MATOSSIAN
MOUFFLON PUBLICATIONS PBK £16.80

BY BRIAN MORTON

Above my desk hangs a small framed sheet of stave paper inscribed with what looks like a river delta or tree roots and signed with the gnomic initials "IX". It is the draft of a tiny graphic 'score' for solo saxophone given to me by Iannis Xenakis in the mid-80s. We met in London, but the inspiration behind this treasured fragment was the flowing glass-and-iron roof of the Kibble Palace plant house, currently under reconstruction in Glasgow's botanic garden, and the composer's strongest memory of an earlier visit to Scotland.

It has always been hard to forget that Xenakis began his career as an architect, Le Corbusier's collaborator. The stresses, loads, spans and foundations of his work have a massive physicality and functional simplicity that resembles the abstraction not of 'abstract art' but of Russian Constructivism. Nouritza Matossian asked him about this at his Paris studio in spring 1990, a conversation begun in English, concluded in French, but with a polyglottal resonance on both sides. Was he aware of a tendency towards abstraction when working with Le Corbusier? "The abstraction relies in the forms, in the proportions of something that had to be useful," he replied. "There are parts where the architect can decide about the forms, and there you have this inner necessity which appears..."

There are those who would argue that in his later years, Xenakis — so often dismissed as cold, mathematical, brutalist, a composer who worked in concrete and metal — became steadily more 'romantic'. That, of course, is not what he meant by inner necessity, but the genius of Matossian's highly personal and empathetic account is that it gives life and context not just to the stochastic approach, but also to the scarred, passionate, eternally vibrant man who made the music.

Matossian published the first version of this book in 1981. Xenakis approved the book — indeed, it's his signature, not hers, that appears on my copy — and urged Matossian to write a second volume. One understands her decision not to. The last 20 years of her subject's career, let's say from *Mists* for solo piano to the tiny, final *O-Mega*, were hardly a dying fall, creatively speaking, but they were acted out against an entrenched resistance from the music community. Only now does Xenakis take his rightful, posthumous place with the other 20th century giants. For an assessment of his recorded work, you can't do better than refer to Philip Clark's excellent Primer (*The Wire* 259). For insight into how life and work intersect, however, Matossian is indispensable.

Xenakis offered no direct help toward her account of his culturally complex childhood, born May 1922, or possibly a year earlier, and his role in the Greek resistance (first against the Germans, then the British), but Matossian has described how he wept when he read the account of his catastrophic wounding, which took his left eye and left that side of his face profoundly and permanently damaged. He did, however, offer unique access to his archive and correspondence and provided unprecedented insight into his working methods and relationships both with contemporaries (Boulez, Messiaen, the rather older Varèse) and earlier figures ("Père Bach" and, surprisingly, Brahms). Matossian's close understanding of the digital revolution in art is both fuelled by and illuminates her understanding of Xenakis.

It is founded in her visceral understanding that his music is not about mathematical determinism — iron laws of creation — but instead marked by what she evocatively describes (in that same 1990 interview) as "surprises and breaks and ruptures and juxtapositions", precisely the effect that an open-eared listening to the critical opus one *Metastaseis* delivers. Only someone primed to expect a slide-rule piece, dominated by the logarithm table, hears it any differently.

To some extent, one wishes she *had* written a fresh second volume, but the original book was so inexhaustibly rich in detail and insight that the relatively slight denouement and coda of this new edition seem more like a challenge than an anti-climax. This is model music history and exemplary biographical writing. □

PHOTO: VITALIANO NAPOLITANO/REDFERNS

Totally wired Aphex Twin

WARP
ROB YOUNG WITH ADRIAN SHAUGHNESSY
BLACK DOG PUBLISHING PBK £20

BY DEREK WALMSLEY

A recent job advertisement in *The Guardian* invited applications for Head of Creative Development at Warp Films, a tidy salary of £55,000 available to an individual of the right calibre Such sums were unknown to Sheffield's Warp Records in the late 80s, when FON producer Rob Gordon and record shop youngsters Rob Mitchell and Steve Beckett were shifting white labels of "Track With No Name" by The Forgemasters. As it happens, the record label and film company are now separate animals, sharing an independent philosophy, but neither personnel nor bank account. Yet this only underlines the enduring affection and trust for the Warp logo wherever it may crop up. As such, Warp's peculiar journey demands a visual as much as descriptive historical account, and *The Wire*'s own Rob Young illuminates the story with flyers, press releases and photos of the era, in the first in a projected series of label profiles, called Labels Unlimited.

In the early years, Warp's cute sci-fi logo — and the almost onomatopoeic name, chosen when the word "Warped" proved difficult to relate by phone — was a friendly assurance of twisted electronic affect. 'Bleep' tracks by the likes of Nightmares On Wax, LFO and Tricky Disco were abstract but imposing, tough yet malleable like Sheffield's steel. As with any cottage industry, it was the detail that made Warp unique — Gordon cut tracks at the same plant as Greensleeves f or maximum sub-bass effect, and tracks such as "LFO" were signed on the basis of unmarked cassettes mashing it up across Yorkshire's nightclubs Support for bedroom auteurs provided a platform for the *Artificial Intelligence* albums by artists such as Aphex Twin, Autechre and Black Dog (the average age of artists on the first *Artificial Intelligence* compilation was a startling 22) and the later drill 'n' bass extrapolations of Squarepusher. More recently, Warp's roster has explored the outer orbits of pop music with Broadcast and Vincent Gallo, also launching satellite labels into experimental hiphop (Lex) and film

What made Warp warped for all these years was not so much a core musical philosophy (new wave revivalists such as Maximo Park and !!! were unthinkable on the Warp of the mid-90s) as an unerring ability to select artists pursuing similar lines of inquiry The history of Warp is partly a history of ideas Rob Young traces a nimble narrative through the introspections of the *Artificial Intelligence* artists, the breathless trains of thoughts of Squarepusher and Aphex Twin, and the cautious romanticism of Boards Of Canada and Mira Calix The mixed media approach also reaps dividends A fax sent by the young LFO to a Japanese fanzine betrays not only bad spelling, but a fiercely guarded independence behind their soundcraft, while a photo of their old living room studio suggests their lurid suburban carpet might have been a secret inspiration behind the famous Warp shade of purple. Adrian Shaughnessy's discussion of Warp's design values casts a commercially savvy eye across their eyecatching sleeves, inclining slightly towards lush later sleeves rather at the expense of the earlier rough and ready ones

One only wishes *Warp* could have been accorded more space. The discography is too short, listing titles of albums and EPs without full tracklistings, the backstory of Chicago House and Detroit Techno is squashed into a couple of paragraphs Nevertheless, this diligent inspection of the kinks and digressions in the Warp story reveals more of the underwiring of electronica than ever before □

CIRCULAR BREATHING: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF JAZZ IN BRITAIN
GEORGE MCKAY
DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS PBK $22 95

BY JULIAN COWLEY

I admit that my heart sinks whenever I encounter the word 'problematic' used as a noun. George McKay, a Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Salford, announces at the end of his introduction to *Circular Breathing* that he is addressing "the jazz problematic". A dispiriting moment at the close of a dispiriting chapter, diffuse in content and peppered in requisite academic fashion with quotes that are meant to carry the stamp of authority but in this case are too often weightless or banal Nonetheless, I pressed on, curious to see how McKay has analysed jazz as "a prime export culture" and to sample his findings on the politics of British jazz experience.

The five chapters that follow are probes launched into a broad terrain that seems to resist coherent mapping. In McKay's hands, jazz becomes a singularly slippery phenomenon. Maybe that's accurate, his concluding remarks suggest after all that "the foundational fluidity of the form" has granted him permission for "a definitional openness" Nonetheless, omissions and elisions glare. To begin with, he looks at the jazz boom of the 1950s, the factionalism of trad and revivalist fans, Lord Montagu's staging of festivals at Beaulieu and the CND protest rallies marching to Aldermaston. To close, he considers feminist responses to masculinist assumptions pervasive even in ostensibly radical communities of jazz musicians and audiences. Between writing on Ken Colyer and on the Feminist Improvising Group, McKay considers the plight in England of West Indian saxophonist Joe Harriott and the South African musicians of The Blue Notes, surveys racial alignments and rifts more generally within the music, and ponders the overt political affiliations of 1960s and 1970s improvisors, generously including The Scratch Orchestra and Henry Cow as well as Mike Westbrook and participants in the London Musicians' Collective

Each of these probes really needs much fuller, book-length treatment; McKay would doubtless be eager to oblige if an amenable publisher could be found There are now and again moving and stimulating moments in *Circular Breathing*, but overall it's not easy to gauge what readers will feel inclined to take from it. Those with a fair grounding in jazz history will probably find much of the information it offers familiar, most of the analysis little more than self-evident observation Eyebrows will undoubtedly be raised in response to McKay's enthusiasm for the honky-tonk pop pianist Winifred Atwell, who is offered as "a compelling if predictable case study of the limitations of a male-constructed historical model in a male-dominated cultural formation"

Newcomers to jazz, on the other hand, will encounter a very partial picture of British jazz, skewed by the author's academically sanctioned agenda That's not to deny the importance of the issues he raises — far from it — but the extent of what has been left out could have been more responsibly acknowledged. Vaudevillian performer George Melly and the late writer and trumpeter Jeff Nuttall are quoted extensively, so are singer Maggie Nicols and AMM drummer Eddie Prévost But it's indicative, perhaps, that Steve Beresford ultimately comes across as the book's principal commentator on issues in British jazz Beresford is insightful, informed and articulate and his participation in and organisation of free improvisation events have been vital to that scene. But given the scope assumed by McKay's study, it seems eccentric to grant Beresford such prominence in the absence of other perhaps less readily accessible voices. McKay states that his goal has been "to refigure British jazz history to more comprehensively include its ideological assumptions and actions" He has succeeded at least to the extent of establishing a basis for further books and for more incisive and vigorously supported analysis □

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: parallel exhibitions and events at Bristol's Arnolfini celebrate the legacies of John Cage and Black Mountain College. By Ian White

Left to right: John Cage at Black Mountain College, 1952, reconstruction of Buckminster Fuller's *Geodesic Dome* in Starting At Zero, Akio Suzuki's *Pyramid* (2005) in Playing John Cage

Black Mountain College in North Carolina was probably the 20th century's most profoundly influential interdisciplinary educational institution. Such, one imagines, was the start (and end) point for Caroline Collier and Michael Harrison, co-curators of Starting At Zero: Black Mountain College 1933–57, an exhibition running at Arnolfini in Bristol before travelling eastwards to Kettle's Yard in Cambridge.

Founded in 1933 by the classics scholar John Andrew Rice, the college's trajectory was broadly defined first by the influence of the teachings (and, here indivisible from that, the practices) of the German Bauhaus emigres, Josef and Anni Albers, and afterwards by the poet Charles Olson, until its closure in 1957. Black Mountain refused any connection to traditional education, foregrounding process over product and community over competition. Its combined roll call of faculty members, visitors, lecturers and students is overwhelming and disconcertingly definitive: Robert Motherwell, Walter Gropius, Aldous Huxley, Heinrich Jalowetz, Buckminster Fuller, Willem De Kooning, Merce Cunningham, MC Richards and John Cage are but a meagre cross-section. Radical thinking was enacted by equally alternative ways of being; painters performed, writers painted, musicians made pots and collectively everyone built their own campus. Given such unimaginable strategies conducted in the idyllic Blue Ridge mountains, it is hardly surprising that Black Mountain is conjured now as a place of myth, fuelled by, and constructed against, a backdrop of the rise of Nazism in Germany. A large number of artists leaving Europe, often in fear of their lives, found a haven there.

Collier and Harrison's re-institutionalising of that place – as the subject of an exhibition in an art gallery – foregrounds chronology over experiment. Privileging the visual arts over the written word, the show barely addresses the position of music within its elsewhere wild corpus, and only glimpses at performance, predominantly through framed archival photographs. Like a history book, the gallery walls are arranged with samples of works from as many key artists as could fit, hung side by side like a graduation show. From Josef Albers's paintings and Anni Albers's magical weavings to a Cy Twombly painting; the formalism and gesture of Elaine De Kooning's *Untitled #16* (1948) to Franz Kline's expressive *Untitled* (1952). That one can sit inside Buckminster Fuller's *Geodesic Dome* (originally built in 1949, and here reconstructed by local architecture students), and look outside to see a monitor playing a recording of Merce Cunningham and Carolyn Brown dancing *Night Wandering* (1964) is one of the only instances of the show crossing some display-design boundaries of its own. Cunningham's piece testifies to how central to the Black Mountain credo it was that artists developed unique, disparate vocabularies – the dancers' movements are unwieldy, unlikely, austere and utterly choreographed: a rare moment in an exhibition that otherwise feels very much like the kind of traditionalism which Black Mountain was surely rejecting.

Playing John Cage, a modest-scale one-room exhibition curated by David Toop, accompanies Starting At Zero (at Arnolfini only), and it comes closer to circumscribing a desire for, and dependence on, narrative constructs. Intending to demonstrate Cage's contemporary status, Toop invited artists and musicians (some of whom knew or even worked with the composer) to make new work or collaborate on interpretations of symptomatic 1960s instruction pieces, presented here using wall-mounted, Perspex-encased iPods. The likes of Brown Sierra, Peter Cusack, Günter Müller, Tom Recchion, Toop himself and many more did what they could to "make as many different sounds as possible with a table" (*Table Music*, Michael Parsons, 1969) or "make sounds with stones... Do not break anything" (*Stones*, Christian Wolff, 196B) for visitors' headphonic delight. Such interpretations – made *for* the listener – and their exhibition were equally re-inscriptions of the division between artist and viewer, between art to be witnessed and life to be lived that Cage (like Black Mountain) might otherwise have wanted to erode.

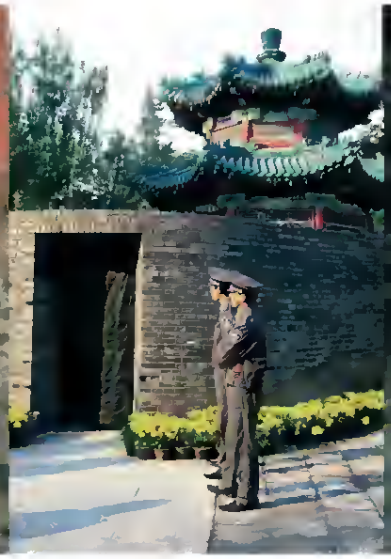
Despite Akio Suzuki's beguiling *Pyramid* – a floor based grid of layered glassine paper at the centre of which a delicate, open cage contains an ear-shaped stone – the gallery here was nowhere near silent enough to hear much art. Takagi Masakatsu's minimalist blur of video stills from Cage's favourite Zen garden, Ryoanji, set to the random shuffling of Ryoji Ikeda's and Carsten Nicolai's delicately pitched soundtracks, was close to disappearing. With its pleasing echoing of the *Geodesic Dome* upstairs, Kaffe Matthews's installation *This Is For You* was a reclining chair set in a bower of upside-down (dead) branches, which placed the visitor firmly at prey to aural assault and was acute in doing so. An exhibition celebrating an artist whose work profoundly questions what qualifies as art, validates the everyday, insists on chance, was otherwise inaudible (or ironically audible) under the deluge of those things it valorises: chatter and clutter from the gallery's cafe, voices, pushchairs, doors opening, tills ringing in the entrance hall, and we, the public.

In the first of the concert series that Toop organised in the gallery's auditorium – an alternative (or extended) manifestation of the exhibition – Alvin Curran, Matthews, Michael Prime, Suzuki and Toop improvised solo and together with inevitably varying degrees of eloquence: the intense clarity of Toop's breathy flute, Suzuki's sharp knocking together of stones, the bludgeoning foghorn of Curran's found-sound synthesizer. The historical compositions of Cage (including *59½ Seconds For A String Player* (1953) and *Seven Haiku* (1951-52), pieces by Morton Feldman, Eric Satie and more, were by extraordinary contrast absolutely poised: taut, structured and exquisitely crafted works. The longer the players improvised, the less was being articulated, the further away from Cage we were all being misled.

In spite of just how many doors Cage blew down with a puff of Zen, the divide between art and life remains in the ways by which we receive it – removed, in white or black rooms. During the first half of the concert, I used a pencil to make notes. In the interval the woman sitting next to me asked if she could give me a pen to use instead. The faint scratchings of the pencil (which was not art) was distracting from the noise the musicians were making (which was the art we were there to hear). She was quite right. □

Starting At Zero: Black Mountain College 1933-57 is at Bristol Arnolfini, to 15 January, and Cambridge Kettle's Yard, 28 January-2 April. In The Shadow Of Black Mountain, a concert of experimental music performed by Apartment House, is on 14 January at Arnolfini. See Out There for details

PHOTOS: ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG/VAGA, NEW YORK/DACS LONDON 2005 (CAGE); JAMIE WOODLEY (FULLER, SUZUKI), DON WATSON (BEIJING)



Left to right: Beijing ambience in Ritan Park, guards outside David Toop's installation, Toop tuning in

SOUND AND THE CITY
BEIJING VARIOUS VENUES
CHINA

BY DON WATSON

We are living in a world in which the tyranny of the visual has turned us into maladjusted creatures capable of sophisticated decoding of the stimuli of signs and symbols, but unable either to articulate or to comprehend the multiple ways in which sound contributes to our environment, our emotions, our well-being.

This was the undercurrent of David Toop's argument in a talk on sound and art, which opened China's Sound And The City project in Beijing. Co-curated by the London and Beijing operations of the British Council and also taking place in Shanghai, Chongqing and Guangzhou, the concept of the two month event is to let sound artists loose in Chinese cities, with the only proviso that the resulting artworks they produce should be public. "We wanted the events to draw from the city, but to give back to it via chance encounters with its residents," says the British Council Beijing's arts manager Colin Chinnery, once a member of Beijing experimental rock group, Xue Wei (Pressure Point, as in acupuncture).

Toop's talk was a part of the educational programme of the project, aiming to give some extra input to the already flourishing New Music scene in Beijing. A new generation is currently emerging in the city, with a deeper knowledge of Western music than their predecessors. New York's No Wave is a touchstone, so the presence of *No New York* producer Brian Eno caused a certain frisson, but the sound art concept is an exciting new possibility for a city whose energy and will to experiment is tangible. Surprising as it is to bump into Einstürzende Neubauten's Blixa Bargeld here, it makes perfect sense that he should have been motivated to move to Beijing, where he has found a combination of the creativity of the 'Geniale Dilletanten' period Berlin, with the powerful dynamic of change that occurred when the Berlin Wall fell.

Unexpectedly, David Toop also found himself talking to the Beijing Olympic Committee, who were intrigued by the notion of building sound ecology into their planning.

"People always start with legislation to prevent noise pollution," says Toop, "but what happens then is they ban the most interesting noises. Like people who buy expensive riverside apartments in London and then start complaining about the noise of barges hitting the bulwarks."

Exposure to Toop's thinking can have the effect of making you hypersensitive to sound, which can turn a walk through one of Beijing's parks into a spontaneous replication of an early Cage piece. At strategic points of the Temple Of Heaven Park in the early morning, the tinny sound of ballroom dance music overlaps with the blind erhu (two-stringed violin) player, the impromptu orchestra of harmonica players and the faint sound of the giant mop-like brush being dipped in a pond, as old men practise calligraphy with water.

Beijing's parks, with their rich soundscapes and their extraordinary focus for a range of communal activity that seems to draw from a communist sense of unity as well as from older traditions, are a central part of Sound And The City. It was Temple Of Heaven that inspired Brian Eno on an early visit to the city. Peter Cusack, who oversaw a competition for Beijing's Favourite Sound (based on his 2002 LMC CD of favourite London sounds) found himself recording the old women singing traditional songs at dawn in Jingshan Park, and David Toop's installation *Beijing Water Writing*, inspired by the Temple Of Heaven calligraphers, was sited in Zhongshan Park by the Forbidden City.

As the characters drawn in water fade, so many of the old Beijing sounds drawn on by Toop – street musicians, insects, birds and the cries within the hutongs or alleyways – are in danger of being submerged in the grey television static of noise that is the by-product of the brutal development of the capital city of the world's fastest growing economy.

The form of the installation reflected this concern with noise pollution, which Toop memorably describes as "an involuntary immersion therapy". The bomb-shelter-like structure, constructed in a matter of days after the tortuous process of securing official permissions had been completed, contained a bank of headphones. "If you're commenting on noise pollution," says Toop, "you don't want to be contributing to it."

Toop's interest in the place of sound to frame silence in ritual, informs the structure of his composition. As the process of transference seems to invest the sound itself with significance in a religious setting, so the hypnotic quality of Toop's pieces lend a pathos to the sounds of his collage, that clearly reflect his fascination with the complexity of the Beijing soundscape.

It's good to hear that Toop's own memorial to a time and a place will be given a permanent presence in the city's brand new Capital Museum. But there is a pathos in the reflection of just how necessary it is to capture these sounds before they fade.

Beijingers, a friend from Hong Kong tells me, are known for the natural poetry of their speech, which the contributions to Peter Cusack's Favourite Sound project illustrate. "I like the sound made by Chinese dates when they are falling on the ground in the small courtyards of Chinese traditional single-storey house," wrote Jiang Chang. "The sound of the dates falling on the basins is particularly crisp and melodious. Hearing that sound, I feel so satisfied, as if I've tasted the sweet dates. The aftertaste is so good."

Zhang Xiao Zhen, the young sound recordist assigned to capture the sound as part of Cusack's project, was intrigued less by the description, than by the percussive sound of the dates landing in the metal basins – somewhere between the ping of a crystal glass and the crash of a cymbal. Having captured it countless times on minidisc, she departed pledging to use it as the basis for her own composition.

Arriving at the Temple Of The Sun (an open-air circular structure in Ritan Park) for the launch of Brian Eno's unnamed installation, *The Wire* discovered a bemused Eno cursing the sense of uniformity of a Chinese technician. "The whole point is that the 16 CDs are of different lengths, which stops the combination of sounds repeating, so that you keep hearing something different."

Suspecting that Eno had made a mistake, the technician has cut them all at the same length, thereby destroying Eno's pattern of random combinations. "Can you imagine this happening to Beethoven?" Eno jokes. "He arrives at the concert hall to discover that the copyist has converted all the key signatures to C major."

The indefatigable Colin Chinnery is on a mobile rattling away in Chinese, and within an hour a correctly cut batch of CDs has arrived by taxi. In the meantime, the Temple Of The Sun's usual assembly of aged kite fliers and intergenerational t'ai chi groups continue their recreation. "Have you ever been in a place so close to the centre of a capital city that is so silent?" asks Eno.

The switch is flicked to start Eno's installation and... nothing happens. Then a bell rings, so crisp and clear it seems inconceivable that it is emanating from one of the tiny portable CD players placed around the temple's perimeter. Familiarity with Eno's works, and the principle of random combination which has informed his installations for decades, just doesn't prepare you for the sheer beauty of what follows.

Part of the appeal is the diversity of the sounds, from high clear notes like struck crystal, to a deeply resonant sound, apparently created electronically (as all the sounds were) from the sound patterns that would have been emitted by the largest bell ever produced. The fact that the bell, manufactured in Russia, turned out to be too big for the laws of physics and cracked in the casting, seems somehow to add to the experience – you are listening to an impossible sound.

Which brings us to the broader implications of the word resonance. The sound seems so English – the association of church bells with an innocent and partly mythical bygone existence is deeply rooted in anyone who has come within range of the Anglo-Saxon radar. Eno himself describes bell ringing, whose mathematical complexities are an obvious fascination for him, as England's "one great musical tradition". And yet the sensitivity of the piece to its environment, the way in which it seems to frame rather than break the silence of the temple, makes it simultaneously sound Eastern. The kite flyers and t'ai chi groups carry on unperturbed, but smile and indicate their approval through translators.

As the light changes and the shadow lengthens, the atmosphere of the piece evolves. "Unfortunately, we need to turn it off at night," says Eno. "It's a shame, it would be wonderful to hear it in the dark and have to place where the sound was coming from."

But at dawn, the t'ai chi groups will gather, the installation will be switched back on. And it will all begin again. ☐ *Sound And The City events continue in various Chinese venues until June 2006. For details, go to www.britishcouncil.org.cn/SATC/*

Left to right: His noise at Her Noise, John Bisset, Nikos Veliotis and Ricardo Arias in New York's first Relay

HER NOISE
LONDON SOUTH LONDON GALLERY
UK

BY BRIAN DILLON

"Noise: why suffer in silence?" From a lamppost on the Peckham Road, lightning-bolt letters (courtesy of the local council) encouraged residents, their nerves shredded by antisocial frequencies, to seek legal redress for sonic assault. At the adjacent South London Gallery, the slogan had another resonance: it might have been read as a call to rude arms. Her Noise, curated by *Wire* staffer Anne Hilde Neset and Lina Ozuverovic, under the banner of Electra, was an ambitious corralling of music, sound art, installation, live performance and assorted documentation by contemporary women artists. It traced several competing lineages of female creativity in the field of experimental music. Given that the contemporary art world – and, yes, some caveats are in order here – is nothing like so dominated by dismal masculinism as music still seems to be, this made for a disjunctive experience: an exuberant exhibition that was about, partly, the relative invisibility of its practitioners.

Initially, other sorts of disappearance were at issue: the first works that struck you were essentially silent till set abuzz (metaphorically or actually) by the interaction of an audience. Kim Gordon and Jutta Koether's *Reverse Karaoke* was a glittering, ramshackle, handmade tent containing guitar, bass and drums. Visitors were invited to play along for three minutes with the sound of Gordon's recorded voice; at the end, you got a CD of your 'collaboration' and the chance to design your own sleeve. Hayley Newman's *MiniFlux* was a less immediately responsive conjuring of all the objects used in Fluxus musical scores, rendered in Plasticine. These miniature reminders accompanied, in the course of the exhibition, performances by Bruce Gilbert, the Bohman Brothers and Marganta Gluzberg. Both of these central works appealed to a spirit of amateurism and improvisation, of installation as interaction. Kaffe Matthews's *Sonic Bed Laboratory* was more engaging, despite its cool setting: an austere bed on which up to six people at a time could be prodded, walloped, soothed and needled by patterns of boisterous or stealthy sound. Christina Kubisch's *Security* – in which a net of wires transmitted the sounds of electromagnetic fields from several cities to a listener's headphones – was equally unsettling.

Despite all this immersive activity, in a sense the most inspiring aspect of *Her Noise* was a series of interviews and documentary films. Once you got past the one-note joke of *Men in Experimental Music* – Jim O'Rourke and Thurston Moore responding somewhat smugly to Gordon and Neset's wry interrogation: "As a man in experimental music, do you ever feel marginalised?" – it was precisely the modest historical record that seemed worth hanging onto, curating, archiving. In *Daytrip Maryanne*, Moore accompanied sound sculptor Maryanne Amacher on a tour of her independent, eccentric career. Other wayward subjects included Diamanda Galas, Kevin Blechdom and Lydia Lunch. Chicks On Speed and Erase Errata played the dressing-room group interview to deadpan perfection, and Karen Black vocalist Kembra Pfahler intoned distractedly that she would like "to live in a dome with the new feralists".

You could object that *Her Noise* invoked a familiar canon too readily, Kim Gordon predictably essaying the part of presiding eminence. Of course, an event like this needs her sort of cultural capital, and no doubt the curators would agree that it was just one among many possible points around which these sounds could have circulated. The cover of the accompanying catalogue – a decentred map of links between musicians – offered the tantalising suggestion that another version of *Her Noise* could have had at its conceptual heart the likes of Hildegard Von Bingen, Shirley Collins or MIA.

RELAY ~ NYC!
NEW YORK MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
USA

BY KURT GOTTSCHALK

Tucked away in a dead-end passage of New York City's year-old Museum Of Modern Art, Miya Masaoka begins a quick, percussive staccato with fingerpicks against her koto's strings. Robert Dick quickly joins in with breathy bass flute notes and Joan La Barbara with whispered singing. A handful of staff and documenters sit on the floor up front, while other museum visitors keep a cautious distance at the other end of the hall. The space slowly fills with curious people, perhaps more open to abstract audio during an afternoon of modern art than they might be if they happened into a downtown club.

The proceedings are soon interrupted by New Yorker Jane Rigler, who walks up, flute in hand, to join the performance. La Barbara retires, wandering off to the large second-floor atrium where British guitarist John Bisset, New York electronicist Ikue Mori and Greek cellist Nikos Veliotis have also begun a quiet set. La Barbara's arrival means someone must leave, and so Bisset heads back up to the fourth floor, striking a sharp chord that sends Masaoka packing, lugging her custom 25-string koto to the lifts.

Relay was first conceived in London more than a decade ago by Bisset and his collaborator Lester Moses, and has been performed at pubs, street fairs and abandoned buildings across Europe. The piece is structured for no less than 13 musicians, rotating through three performance areas. These MoMA performances marked the first time Relay had been brought to America, and the first time it wasn't organised by Bisset. Rigler pulled together musicians from five countries, a remarkable assemblage that included New Yorkers Ricardo Anas (balloons), Rachael Elliot (bassoon), Pauline Oliveros (accordion) and Jack Wright (saxophone) and German percussionist Burkhard Beins.

It makes for a fascinatingly frustrating presentation. Losing sight of a favoured player means wandering two floors and through crowded galleries. A fertile combination is likely to last ten minutes at best, and walking out is hardly an indictment. The audience members are forced to be active participants in an ever-shifting audio installation. Rare is the concert that requires listeners to make their own decisions on what to do, but with Relay, staying put becomes an act of laziness and moving, perhaps, a display of attention deficit.

Nor do the artists know what they're walking into. With constant shifting, they can only pick a room. Spanish clarinettist Wade Matthews smiled as he walked into an area filled with styrofoam, latex and drum heads squalling away, promptly taking the makeshift stage and tearing up a programme, adding paper shredding to the soundscape. Such happenstance is the fabric of Relay. The second day ended with the artists slowly (and without planning) coming together in the atrium, building a gorgeous audio envelope against large Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly canvases and a hulking Barnett Newman steel obelisk, combining in small groups and making use of the acoustics of the open five-storey room. An audience built over the previous two hours – many unfamiliar with such non-idiomatic improvisation – sat entranced.

THE NOMI SONG
ANDREW HORN (DIRECTOR) 2004, 96 MINS
PALM PICTURES DVD

BY MICHELE KIRSCH

This documentary is primarily about the brief, brilliant career of the Lower East Side based West German counter-tenor and new wave artist Klaus Nomi (1944-83), but it is tangentially the story of the original club kids who formed the incestuous, self-referential but artistically vibrant music, art and fashion scenes in late 70s/early 80s downtown Manhattan.

Opening with a scene pinched from a 60s sci-fi outer space movie, Andrew Horn sets the tone for the camp otherness that Nomi embodied, an extraterrestrial diva beamed down from planet pre-war *Cabaret*-era Berlin. The clips of his early performances in downtown dives are grainy, seeming at once older than they actually are, and yet totally fresh because everything about Nomi was so out of context, including his rendering of the breezy 60s pop song, "Lightnin' Strikes", as operatic threat. The fully orchestrated, bombastic performances of Nomi's final years made up for in sheer drama what they lacked in energy, but his singing was always spectacular.

The talking heads (all habitués of that downtown world in general, and of Nomi's weirder one in particular) are articulate, often funny, and very good at capturing the poignancy of a lost moment in time. Performance artist Ann Magnuson recalls her first meeting with Nomi, who bounded up a pile of dirty snow and broke out into an aria on a cold winter night, and how she insisted he perform at her cabaret club for "geeks, Nazis and emotional cripples". All this interspersed with home-movie quality footage of the likes of Television and Talking Heads hanging out in clubs, the Nomi dancing boys gyrating to The B-52s at a party, and exterior shots of the not-yet gentrified Lower East Side, including a lovely shot of some of Jean-Michel Basquiat's SAMO graffiti: "Life is confusing at this point".

Predictably, life became confusing for Nomi as soon as he signed to a major record label that sacked his original group and replaced them with studio musicians more used to playing in big hair New Jersey rock outfits. The film loses its narrative grip here, with former group members bitching about being dropped or admitting that they became alienated from Nomi when he got "the gay cancer". The alien persona became fully realised when the AIDS that ravaged his body caused many of his friends to recoil in fear. □

PHOTOS: MARCUS LEITH (HER NOISE), JAMES KUO (RELAY)

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by Emma Gaze

BOB DYLAN
BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME
COLUMBIA 1965
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL KRAMER

This is one of the first record sleeves I remember being truly fascinated by. Growing up in Devon, our household had a definite Bob Dylan soundtrack. We knew every song from *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Another Side...*, *Blonde On Blonde* and *Freewheelin'* by heart, including where the skips and the scratches were in the vinyl. All the records belonged to my mother, when I moved out and had to replace them, it was really weird to hear them without the jumps and pauses, and, actually, I miss them. By the age of seven or eight, I was already a firm Dylan fan.

Sunday mornings were generally spent with all of us nine kids picking records and dancing in the living room. It was a ritual that we would wake up our mum with badly made tea, burnt toast and "She Belongs To Me" at a very high volume. We were always making up stories about record sleeves, my sister Annabel frequently scaring the shit out of us. Her version of this Dylan sleeve was that Bob and the red woman (for some reason, women in red were synonymous with evil deeds and adultery) were hiding out from a nuclear attack and, pretty soon, the fallout would reach them and they would languish and slowly die, the kitten, too... It was this last bit that got me the most.

I always found the cover of *Bringing It All Back Home* amazing. There's so much going on in the photograph. The blurry edges drew me in and it kind of made me feel like I was looking through the keyhole and had been spotted by Bob. And he was pissed. They seemed such a glamorous couple and the whole world was spying on them. I love that they are in a messy, bohemian room.

Maybe that's why I like it so much, it's familiar and comforting. It could have been our own front room. I would imagine Bob and the beautiful lady and their friends all rattling around in a big house, playing music as loud as they liked, and Bob wandering about with his harmonica and guitar singing. I really, really wanted to hang out with them, especially to have a hold of the kitten he's got. Apparently, it was called Rolling Stone. The thing I really like about Dylan is that, when he is photographed for his covers, I never get the feeling that he's trying to be cool or posing (though he clearly is).

It does seem more like we've caught him out – in his front room, walking down the street with his girlfriend, sitting on the porch. He's not entirely ready, but he doesn't really mind. "...a melodic purring line of descriptive hollowness – seen at times through dark sunglasses..." □

Emma Gaze plays drums with Electrelane and is responsible for the group's artwork. Their most recent album, Axes, *is available on Too Pure, a compilation album will be released later this year.*

Go To:

Ever wonder about the lianas of cassette tape that festoon trees, bushes and much else? Edinburgh based artist Zoë Irvine does. Her **Magnetic Migration Music** (www.magneticmigration.net) is a found sound project featuring the fruits of her travels: a spool of tape from the Viennese Prater Park has a hyperactive Gypsy group; tape found by the Sangatte ferry terminal fence – a place that, until a few years ago, was where would-be immigrants to the UK tried to push, shove and tunnel their way into this sceptred isle – has furious, frantic Techno; a tape rescued from a burnt-out and abandoned car in East London is silent, as if governed by its own code of magnetic omertà. This melancholy trawl is testament to one of Irvine's central ideas – that music, and its broadcastable possibilities, exists in a public domain that is Cageian in its width and implications. Her biggest project to date was last month's **Dial-A-Diva** (www.dialadiva.net). Based at Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Arts, Dial-A-Diva was a global concert lasting 24 hours that was accessed only by dialing a special CCA number. Starting in New Zealand as the sun rose on 4 December and ending in Anchorage, people calling in from around the world could hear Palestinian singers in Jerusalem, a time-zone duet between Montréal and Madrid or favela singers doing bossa nova.

Irvine takes her starting idea from the 1880-1920s era, when many conceived of nascent telephone communications as a broadcast medium. Opera houses and theatres in Europe and the US were rigged up with the technology to transmit their events right into any home's receiver. Good ideas never die, especially when the more creative hands get busy. For example, the musicians in **Orchestre Téléphone** (radiophonic.org) come together only in a crescendo of (presumably) the conference call. Of course, Irvine isn't the only one to have considered the role of the phone as a device for receiving or making music. There have been numerous mobile phone symphonies (ring cycles, even), as in the 2001 **Dialtones (A Telesymphony)** in Linz (www.flong.com/telesymphony), and then there are the ringtones. Mercifully, there are now alternatives to downloading the latest J-Lo hit to use on your mobile. A rendition of John Cage's ***4'33"*** (monophonic only) is a snip at £1.50 (uk.mobile.yahoo.com/sounds/monotones/details/3551B/john-cage/433andquot%3B.html?auto=1).

From the inane to the international: those interested in sound and performance in China should keep tabs on **Global Noise Online** (globalnoiseonline.wordpress.com), a roundup of all experimental Asian music. Its author has a keen editorial eye: the current Bristol Arnolfini show on Cage is not, we're told, called "Playing With John Cage".

LOUISE GRAY

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh

PHOTOS BENEDICT DREW

LMC ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC
LONDON BRIDEWELL THEATRE
UK

BY PHIL ENGLAND

Now in its 14th year, the London Musicians' Collective's annual festival moved into an intimate theatre space for a run of five nights. A smaller venue than in recent years, the event was also free-if-booked-in-advance and programmed by current LMC administrator Ben Orew – himself an accomplished designer, laptop improvisor and video artist – who lent it his distinctive, personal twist.

Each evening started with the festival commission, Common Object – a group put together by harpist Rhodri Davies. For me, this group was the highlight of the festival, and having a chance to see them perform nightly was a genuine pleasure. The group managed to embrace five disparate musical personalities without resorting to the quick response style of interplay that characterises a good deal of improvised music. At any one time that might include Angharad Davies playing textures or long single notes on violin, Italian guitarist Giuseppe Ielasi making his guitar chime like bells; Rhodri using his harp to excite the sub-bass speakers, Alastair Leslie injecting a healthy dollop of computer-triggered noise, and Lee Patterson's more tentative, wild-card interventions. On a good night (three out of five ain't bad), their lightly-directed improvisations moved from the terrifying to the sublime, encompassing the full textural range in a restrained yet dynamic unity.

On the first night they were sharing the bill with AMM. Since the split with founding member Keith Rowe, the group consists solely of percussionist Eddie Prévost and pianist John Tilbury. On this occasion, they were joined by David Jackman, who largely played bowed cymbals. On the evidence of this performance, the group sound is emptying out, like a Buddhist progressively giving up attachments. The tumultuous storms of earlier times have largely been replaced by a suspended stillness.

One of the festival's running themes was the nightly inclusion of a solo laptop performance. Overwhelmingly, these consisted of playbacks of prerecorded works, presided over by the studious eye of the composer in front of an illuminated screen who would occasionally tweak the level on a mixing desk to justify their presence. Ivan Seal's work – despite its chunky sounds, dramatic use of the stereo field and oppressive playback volume – was a fairly conventional electroacoustic work in three movements. The young Louisa Martin's sequence combined loops, a smudged gaggle of voices and some room-shaking sub-bass. The acclaimed Richard Chartier showcased his widescreen landscape of sound, slowly shifting in a post-Hafler Trio kind of way complete with sound phantoms, acoustic ghosts and his characteristic use of the sound of pins dropping on a metal surface.

Performances of improvised music, by contrast, demonstrated a less oppressive, more playful attitude to technologies both new and old. Carole and Jem Finer unpicked a bluegrass theme on two banjos until it became a open landscape for small sound improvisation – their brief performance conjuring up an image of congenial domestic, social music making. The trio of Jean-Philippe Gross, Will Guthrie and Ferran Fages approached the soundworld of Voice Crack with a tabletop full of primitive feedback circuits, open loudspeakers and a turntable as a revolving source of friction for sounding found objects. Vienna-born Dieter Kovacic aka Dieb13 used three turntables and a mixing desk to produce a surface noise-heavy mix of obscured sound sources like a less frantic, more blissed out Christian Marclay.

The festival offered a rare opportunity to see Steve Beresford play piano (he usually plays electronics in London clubs), and we were treated to a dose of his frenetic Paul Bley lyricism before his irresistible drive to slapstick disruption took over. Another pianist, Tisha Mukarji played entirely inside the piano in a masterly performance that referenced elements of Stephen Scott and Ellen Fullman, but also abrasive squeals in a sparser environment.

Phil Durrant's Trio Sowan played with a distinctive Beckett-like acidity, that posited an apparently selfless art concerned with the purity of physical acoustic phenomenon, largely undisturbed and drained of passion.

Clarinettist Xavier Charles gave a performance which used four upturned loudspeakers as vibrating sounding surfaces on which he placed all manner of household objects from flour to ball bearings, Lego, rice, plastic cups, etc, with different acoustic properties that would often crash into microphones and inevitably end up on the floor. His light-hearted performance was as much about its attractive simplicity, sense of humour and theatre as it was its dense layers of clunky, tinkling textures.

There was a curious synchronicity between this performance and that of Beirut trumpeter Mazen Kerbaj the following night. Kerbaj extends his trumpet by circular breathing through a saxophone mouthpiece attached to a pipe so that he can have the bell end of the trumpet facing upwards between his knees. He then uses this vibrating column of air to rattle various objects before returning the instrument to his mouth to move adeptly in the area of unconventional palette carved out by players like Axel Dörner and John Butcher.

The festival bowed out with an odd coupling typifying the diversity of the artistic statements on show. Linux laptop player Mattin came on looking like Aphex Twin's lost brother and launched into a provocative statement that started with the sound of a hammer repeatedly snapping down loudly on sheet metal at alarming volume. Following this with some roof-rattling sub-bass and directional high tones, Mattin left with us with the sound of our own ears ringing. John Tilbury restored the evening's dignity by lending his gravity and spiritual weight in a performance enhanced by a computer processing program. Written by Sebastien Lexier, it gave the piano a Brian Eno/Harold Budd bath of elongated sustain, with Tilbury manually adjusting the parameters throughout a disarmingly beautiful and poignant finale. □

Opposite page: Xavier Charles (top) and Common Object at the LMC Annual Festival of Experimental Music

OKEANOS
LONDON THE WAREHOUSE
UK

BY CLIVE BELL

The largely female Okeanos quintet has a unique selling point: traditional Japanese instruments are offered to composers alongside oboe, clarinet and viola. The result is a kaleidoscope of vivid colours and some wonderfully lyrical writing. Judging by tonight's collection of concise works by nine British and Japanese composers, the project is flourishing.

Jinny Shaw's mellifluous oboe starts the evening on a balcony over our heads, unravelling Joe Cutler's *Songs Of The Koto*, inspired by images in Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *An Artist Of The Floating World*. *Song Swan*, Paul Archbold's brand new piece, integrates the koto into a quartet that ambles through delicious chords – a woodwind section with a hint of acid from the koto. A sudden, well-timed entry from Robin Thompson's sho mouth organ intensifies the colours further.

There's more patient chordal work in Howard Skempton's *Fragments*. Skempton, a pupil of Cornelius Cardew, is famous for mixing simplicity and wry humour, a combination that makes him, for my money, Britain's most beguiling composer. *Fragments* sounds like a lost Scottish air, heard years before and now recreated from memory by Japanese court musicians.

Melissa Holding's koto sits at the centre of what Okeanos are doing, both literally at the front of the stage, and in the sense that her coolly poised, subtle playing underpins so much of the music. In some hands, the koto can be twanging and aggressive, angrily rattling the bars of its traditional confines. But Holding's approach goes deeper, finding a kind of ancient wisdom in this Japanese equivalent of the Western piano.

Young Japanese composer Akiko Ogawa places memories of her mother's koto playing at the centre of her *Fantasia*. It's a charming piece full of pastel shades, driven along by swooping koto glissandi. Gabriel Jackson refers to his *A Piece Of Sky (After Yoko Ono)* as an "instruction piece". Tolerance and the fragility of the planet are the ideas underlying this unashamedly pretty composition. Seductive melodies and carefully timed Ambient percussion make Jackson's music irresistible – it's too robust to be kitsch, and recalls Harold Budd's pursuit of beauty.

Bridget Carey throws herself bodily into an earthy, exhilarating viola solo that sounds informed by traditional styles. The composer is Philip Neil Martin, recently returned from studying gagaku court music in Japan. Pete Furniss's solo clarinet (standing in for Okeanos's usual Kate Romano) makes a fluent and convincing case for Anthony Powers's *Interludes*: astringent, haiku-like snatches inspired by Wittgenstein. Finally, one of the ensemble's signature pieces: Oai Fujikura's *Okeanos Breeze*. Full of tension, colour and ensemble drama, the work is recognisably Japanese from a mile off, but it was Fujikura's first work to include traditional instruments. □

ANTON LUKOSZEVIEZE: THE ART OF THE CURVED BOW
CAMBRIDGE KETTLE'S YARD
UK

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Cellist Anton Lukoszevieze leads the brilliant chamber group Apartment House and is a key member of radical noise ensemble Zeitkratzer. He is currently New Music fellow at King's College, Cambridge, an enlightened appointment reflecting institutional concern for current music that matches the Kettle's Yard arts centre's approach to its contemporary visual art exhibits. Lukoszevieze is technically adventurous, thoroughly attuned to the sounding potential of his instrument and an intense, enlivening interpreter of scores. The curved bow used for several pieces in this programme enables him to sound all four cello strings simultaneously, as demonstrated in the stately chording of Laurence Crane's *Raimondas Rumsas*, which opened the second half.

In this premiere performance of Christopher Fox's *Arc*, flickering patterns of notes panned gradually back and forth between upper and lower registers, crossing a drone moving in the opposite direction. A visual analogy suggested itself: Lukoszevieze was projecting a mesmerising play of mobility against stasis onto the screen of the cello. Helmut Dehring's *Foxfire Eins* was literally music to watch. The composer grew up with deaf parents and Lukoszevieze described this piece as "music for deaf people", his percussive hand gestures on the instrument acting as a sign language. Following the direct communicativeness of that performance, James Dillon's challenging *Eos* gave Lukoszevieze opportunity to show his dynamic agility with a conventional bow – fragments of bagpipe skirl and Bach allusions whirling within an intricate montage.

A second Fox premiere saw Lukoszevieze layering four *Generic Compositions* – one live, three prerecorded on CD. Each of the constituent parts was generated out of a particular technique. The layering produced a sense of translucency as the attention of listening moved incessantly within the composite field. It was a piece that seemed perfectly at home in the elegantly spacious surroundings of Kettle's Yard. Lukoszevieze's own *ARP Music* was inspired by a poem written by dadaist Hans Arp, note values being assigned to letters. The cello spoke the poem in a meta-language of fragile harmonics. Later, a painting by Fred Sandback was projected onto a wall and a CD recording was played of a new work by the cellist, taking the picture as a score. The image suggested a beaded string of primary colours snaking around the canvas. Lukoszevieze admitted that he felt unprepared to perform the music live and, although there was richness in this quite lengthy piece, the temporary absence of his physical presence was a low spot.

Unequivocal high spots were his playing of Ornette Coleman's *Trinity*, a piece written for radical violinist Malcolm Goldstein, and Goldstein's own *Ishi >>Man Waxiti<< Soundings*. *Trinity* is a suite of melodic fragments, arranged and performed by Lukoszevieze with evident pleasure and bearing the stamp throughout of its origin in Coleman's distinctive imagination. Goldstein's piece, scored as a text, memorialises the last surviving member of the exterminated Yahi people of northern California. Ishi's voice remains preserved on record. The quasi-vocal expressiveness of Lukoszevieze's structured improvising proved an extraordinary instance of technical finesse serving fully the requirements of affecting musicality. □

HIGH ZERO FESTIVAL
BALTIMORE THEATRE PROJECT
USA

BY ANDREW CHOATE

"What could we do that wouldn't be fascinating right now?" This was Carly Ptak's challenge during her second set grouping with cellist Audrey Chen and tape-loop operator Joseph Hammer at Baltimore's High Zero Festival. While the question she asked – standing behind a podium of electronics – might have been meant for the audience, it cuts to the quick of any nonchalant ideas out there that audiences for improvised music will listen to, and be fascinated by, anything. Ptak's performances throughout the weekend tackled that assumption head on, to the point where, unannounced, in the middle of her Sunday set with conch player Che Davis, reedist Scott Rosenberg, and trumpeters Mazen Kerbaj and Birgit Uhler, she brought a homeless poet onstage to read over the top of the music making. After a couple of poems, he exited the stage, only to be tracked down minutes later by Ptak, brought back, introduced (Dkrah is his name) and applauded. The only dilemma here being that the rest of the musicians were still playing, and the talking and clapping completely overrode what they had been working to build. Rosenberg walked off the stage, not to return. While the musicianly ethics of Ptak's actions can be questioned, no doubt exists about her ability to tap into and perform investigations into the unspoken rules of collective improvisation, bringing other dimensions – social, ethical and political – into the forefront of the playing, dimensions that all too frequently remain only imagined and implicit.

As a festival exclusively devoted to all-new collaborations by improvisors, this seventh incarnation of High Zero provided a four day celebration of the inevitable failures and sometimes transcendental powers of improvisation. Sets like the quartet of Audrey Chen, Bonnie Jones (digital delay pedal), Kerbaj and C Spencer Yeh (voice, violin) evinced the depths that instant sonic rapport can make plumbable. Two other sets stood out for the visceral activity of the musicians: the quartet of Clare Cooper (guzheng), Peter Jacquemyn (double bass), Michael Muniak (laptop, electronics), and Ptak, and the quintet of John Berndt (reeds, electronics), Samuel Burt (laptop, electronics), Che Davis, Tom Goldstein (percussion) and Scott Rosenberg. Cooper's violent guzheng strumming and Jacquemyn's high-torque bass playing egged each other on towards increasing deluges of string density while Muniak spun an overturned bicycle's wheels into electrolyzed blasts of flowering static. Ptak, meanwhile, crawled on her hands and knees drawing deformed chalk circles around each musician, eventually coming to rest at the side of the stage before realising that one more line needed to be drawn – a hard, straight one between the performers and the audience.

Even with musicians from all over the world, it was several local Baltimorean improvisors that proved most impressive. The gestural electronic musicianship of Caleb Johnston and Muniak in particular should serve as official notice to circuit benders and laptop droners worldwide: tying actions (however tender or aggressive) to sounds (however deflated or monstrous) invigorates listening. Johnston, in a set with Jones, Muniak and percussionists Tatsuya Nakatani and Paul Neidhardt, bashed, battered, flicked and tapped the collection of disgorged electronics on the table in front of him, revealing a clairvoyant sense of how to spark the other musicians into hyperactive sensitivity.

If resonance between performers can be considered a parameter of improvised music as equally valuable and existent as pitch, amplitude and duration, then High Zero, with its severe commitment to spotlighting this facet of music making, should rank among the world's most invigorating festivals, and one that carries the legacy of Derek Bailey's Company Weeks in its heart. It was a relentless assault on the comfort zones of listening for the audience and of playing for the musicians. □

RUFF SQWAD
LONDON DIRTY CANVAS AT WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY
UK

BY MATTHEW INGRAM

The Dirty Canvas night represents an unusual foray of Grime music into 'uptown' culture. Curated by aficionado David Moynihan and convening monthly in the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London's East End, the event is planned to be the first of many opportunities for bohemians shy of visiting grassroots events to feel the true underground vibe. It's no surprise to long-standing supporters of the music that it has leapfrogged conventional venues directly into a gallery. The evening's supremely over-articulated thuggery, as evidenced in Ruff Sqwad's pugilistic juggernaut, is a neat counterpoint to the gallery's current Paul McCarthy exhibition, with its Rabelaisian currents, the influence of Viennese Aktionism and a pirate theme to boot.

There should be no doubt as to the threat posed to the established order by the monstrous energy Ruff Sqwad represent. On the day before their gig, the Office of Communications (Ofcom) raided 44 pirate radio stations, seized 53 transmitters, and disabled 17 more, harvesting 43 mobile numbers attached to pirate activity in a bid to clear the airways for the London Fire Brigade and National Air Traffic Services. While the Communications Act, with its aim to "secure optimal use for wireless telegraphy of the electro-magnetic spectrum", was invoked, official comment swiftly dovetailed into critique of the "direct link between some illegal broadcasters and serious crime". What this has to do with a supposedly practical exercise run by Ofcom is anyone's guess. All told, that free-thinking institutions like the Whitechapel have started to make room for Grime's destabilising noise is a positive sign. Too often, supposedly 'alternative' culture chokes on that which isn't produced by the white middle classes, settling for the comfort of the bourgeoisie's self-appointed 'radical' culture.

Not a version of US hiphop, but a London-centric evolution of DJ toasting over Garage records, Grime has flourished in spite of the commercial failure of many of its signature artists: Dizzy Rascal, Wiley and Roll Deep. Ruff Sqwad, the most artistically uncompromising outfit in the underground, use a format typical to the genre. As many as seven MCs accompany their own instrumentals spun by a DJ; this is reminiscent of the earliest hiphop outfits, wherein a progressive social democracy and the collective generation of energy eclipsed in importance beatnik ideals like the artist's ego. Ruff Sqwad's sonics combine the crash of early hiphop (crudely, think Marley Marl on 45) with the trilling synth patterns of Swizz Beatz. However the speed of the riddims and the accompanying breathless glossolalia push everything into the red, forming a molten, strikingly avant garde mess. The evening was a total and unexpected success, Ruff Sqwad feeding off the crowd's energy, unselfconscious in the face of what proved to be a smaller cultural gap than many anticipated. This was a most auspicious start to what promises to be groundbreaking series of events. □

Top row: Scott Rosenberg & Carly Ptak (left) and Mazen Kerbej at High Zero. Bottom row: Ruff Sqwad get grimy in Whitechapel (left), Conrad Bauer & Alan Silva in Newcastle

PHOTOS: STEWART MOSTOFSKY (HIGH ZERO); PAUL KELLY (NEWCASTLE)

ON THE OUTSIDE
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE KING'S HALL
UK

BY ANDY HAMILTON

On The Outside, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne's free jazz and improv festival, has a policy of inviting neglected greats, and in its second year, the outstanding presence was trombonist Paul Rutherford. With Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, Kenny Wheeler and others, he pioneered British free improv in the 60s. The inspired *The Gentle Harm Of The Bourgeoisie* from 1974 was the first of a magnificent series of albums conceptualising his unique and encyclopedic repertoire of trombone sonorities. In recent years Rutehrford has seldom been heard in the UK – he had only two gigs here in the whole of 2004, and his solo set at Newcastle was the first in this country for many years. A spry if slightly gaunt figure, he has had his troubles and his demons, but now is clearly back on top form. He dedicated this performance to the recently deceased Albert Mangelsdorff, his only rival as a solo free improvisor. Tonally, his playing was totally gorgeous, with an amazing fluidity – in more senses than one, given some juicy, slurping notes. His distinctive brand of multiphonics called on a single primitive mute – an empty bottle of Evian water, broken in half. Rutherford was obviously delighted to be back: "It's a pleasure to play in my own country," he added at the end.

Rutherford joined fellow trombonist Conrad Bauer in an unusual but splendid quartet with Joe Morris on guitar and Irene Schweizer on piano. The Swiss pianist, a major figure in European free jazz for 40 years, is musically well acquainted with both players – they've worked together in the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra. Bauer has a more traditional jazz sound, while Rutherford deploys the most avant garde techniques. Joe Morris uses both acoustic and electric instruments, and also a modified acoustic or electroacoustic guitar, and shows some influence from Derek Bailey, but retains a residual jazz groove. His intensely fractured lines were delicate, often skating over the strings, and while he used an amp, none of the other instruments was miked – the piano suffered a little as a result. Schweizer was often inside the instrument, strumming it to make it sound like a harpsichord, and tapping the wood of the case. These players employed plenty of space, and were happy to drop out of the ensemble from time to time. In contrast to the more relaxed main performance, the coda/encore was short and agitated. Bauer also appeared very effectively in a trio with Alan Silva on synthesizer and Roger Turner on percussion.

Guitarist Jeremy Drake and drummer Harris Eisenstadt – both from Canada but based in Los Angeles – were new to me. Fortuitously booked for a theatre project in London around the time of the festival, their quartet with Paul Dunmall on soprano sax and bagpipes – he prefers the bellows-operated Bulgarian pipes, apparently – and John Edwards on bass, at first seemed like a clash in ethos. Eisenstadt was incredibly light on brushes, then sticks and beaters – very loose too, though strangely, much of the time he maintained an offbeat on the hi-hat – while Drake's guitar shadings and washes were equally quiet. Were they really compatible with such muscular players as Dunmall and Edwards? Gradually, however, the quartet adapted, with the Americans turning up the volume a little. Drake and Eisenstadt later played in an all-North American group with multi-instrumental reed players Vinny Golia and Michael Marcus, and Joe Morris. Here, Drake was the soundscape guitarist, Morris the fingerpicker. Marcus began his career on the blues circuit, and there's still a rootsy flavour to the groove based free playing he favours. Here, though, there were no grooves, and he played clarinet, tenor sax and saxello. Vinny Golia's arsenal ranged from sopranino sax to contrabass clarinet, but his lines remained unmemorable, nor did he seem to listen as much to those around him. Marcus, despite his rather functional tone, was a more immediately appealing improvisor.

Irene Schweizer has a deep affinity with drummers – she's recorded a series of duets with some of the world's finest – so it was good to catch her repising the format in a set with Roger Turner. Turner began in explosive form and Schweizer tackled him head-on – then he turned to his eclectic assortment of percussion, including the chain-in-a-box, and little cymbals. Other players featured over the weekend included trumpeter Byron Wallen, saxophonist Elton Dean and drummer Paul Hession, and as is now becoming traditional, the climax was an ensemble featuring all those still standing – though as John Edwards had to leave, Joe Morris took over on bass and three drummers shared two kits. The music went in unforeseen if slightly chaotic directions, conducted by Alan Silva – a memorable conclusion to what's becoming a major event in the Improv calendar. □

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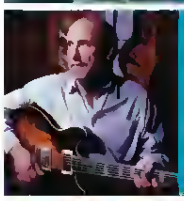

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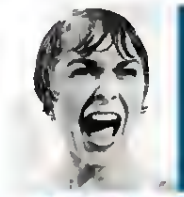

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Christian Marclay's Screen Play: Steve Beresford, John Butcher, Paul Lovens

Sunday
Film Programme 3 **RETRD [inc. Bartlett, Lawder, de Hirsch]**
Film Programme 4 **SPACE [inc. Koner, Sherwin, Yalkut]**
Film Programme 5: **DRAMA [inc. Child, Tscherkassky, Fruhauf]**
Expanded Cinema: **Diagonal + Hand Grenade**
Emma Hart + Benedict Drew
Kazuo Imai + Atsuhiro Ito
Expanded Cinema: **Light Music**

More performances to be confirmed…

Exhibition
Word Processor Derek Lodge & The Duty Managers
18 Feb – 26 Mar 2006 Gallery 2.
Artist Derek Lodge will run a specially designed social space, somewhere for conversation, story-telling and interaction.

Symposium
17 Feb 9.30am – 5pm. Free.
Featuring theorists and artists exploring a range of themes focusing on sound art

Dundee Contemporary Arts, 152 Nethergate, Dundee. **www.dca.org.uk**
Ticket Hotline: **01382 90 99 00. Day pass:** £11/£9. **Festival pass:** £26/£22.
For full listing or to order your festival guide visit.
www.killyourtimidnotion.org

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KYTN is part of Scotland's Experimental Music Partnership, along with Instal, Subcurrent, Free RadICCAls and Le Weekend

Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts. Send info to *The Wire*, 23 Jack's Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk. Compiled by Phil England

John Cage (hiding at the back for once) and his Black Mountain College mates, 1948, in Bristol; Hiroshi Sugimoto's *Caribbean Sea, Jamaica* from *The End Of Time* in Tokyo

UK festivals

FIRST FLATPACK FESTIVAL
BIRMINGHAM
Four days and nights of experimental film shorts, DVDs and other such attractions, all of them with a musical or sound art link. Main draws include Californian maverick artist Henry Jacobs and cut-up queen Vicki Bennett aka People Like Us. Birmingham Electric Cinema, 19-22 January, various times, £4/£5, 0121 449 7432, www.7inch.org.uk

GET CARTER! THE MUSIC OF ELLIOTT CARTER
LONDON
Festival marking the American composer's 97th birthday includes performances of his work by London Sinfonietta, Arditti Quartet, pianist Rolf Hind, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Singers and the Guildhall School Symphony Orchestra. The weekend also includes two composer talks and a number of film portrait showings. London Barbican, 13-15 January, various times & prices, day & weekend passes available, 0845 120 7549, www.barbican.org.uk

International festivals

ALL EARS
NORWAY & SWEDEN
Norwegian festival for improvised music crosses borders with Sweden to celebrate the centennial of the separation of the two states. Featuring Hijokaidan, Otomo Yoshihide, Sachiko M, Sten Ove Toft and others. Oslo & Stockholm, 12-15 January, various venues, times & prices, www.all-ears.no

NETMAGE 06
ITALY
The sixth edition of the international festival exploring "media innovation within the context of electronic arts" features contributions and performances from Carsten Nicolai, Kurt Hentschlager, Andre Dojni/Port-Royal, Arto Lindsay, Nico Vascellari, Simone Tosca, Carola Spadoni, Cineplexx + aBe, Ministry Of Defiance, Katherine Liberovskaya & o.blaat, Bons & Brecht Debackere, Molair, Avatam, Sinistri++/Andy Simionato & Karen Ann Donnachie and Zimmerfrei. Bologna Palazzo Re Enzo, 26-28 January, www.netmage.it

Special events

PLAYING JOHN CAGE
UK
An exhibition of new installations focusing on the legacy of John Cage put together by David Toop. Featured artists include Kaffe Matthews, Alvin Curran, Michael Prime, Akio Suzuki, Rolf Julius, Carsten Nicolai, Takagi Masakatsu and Ryoji Ikeda. The exhibition includes one of Cage's *Ryoanji* drawings and four new audio realisations of text pieces by Gavin Bryars, Christian Wolff, Michael Parsons and Mieko Shiomi, which can be accessed on shuffle play. Running simultaneously is the Starting At Zero exhibition, which focuses on the Black Mountain College (see below). Bristol Arnolfini, to 15 January, Mon-Sun, 10am-8pm, free, 0117 917 2300, www.arnolfini.org.uk

CORNELIUS CARDEW: TREATISE
CANADA
AMM pianist John Tilbury performs the late UK experimental composer's large-scale graphic composition with a local community ensemble. Vancouver Scotiabank Dance Centre, 27 January, 2-5pm open rehearsal, 6pm artist chat, 7-10pm performance, free, 001 604 633 0861, www.newmusic.org

PAUL GELUSO: HOMAGE TO A SITE, 2005
UK
The New York based sound artist has constructed a site specific multichannel sound installation from processed sounds devoid of recognisable musical form, from which participants create their own soundscapes by walking around the space. London SPACE at The Triangle, until 7 January, Wednesday-Saturday 1-6pm, www.spacestudios.org.uk

STARTING AT ZERO: BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE 1933-1957
UK
First UK exhibition to look at the work of the artists, composers, dancers and writers associated with the interdisciplinary hothouse of Black Mountain College, including John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Buckminster Fuller, Willem De Kooning, Robert Rauschenberg, Josef Albers, Anni Albers and others. Bristol Arnolfini, to 15 January, Mon-Sun, 10am-8pm, free, 0117 917 2300, www.arnolfini.org.uk

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO & RYOJI IKEDA: THE END OF TIME
JAPAN
Ikeda creates a minimal sound installation to accompany a series of seascapes as part of a major retrospective of work by Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto. Tokyo Mori Art Museum, to 9 January

On stage

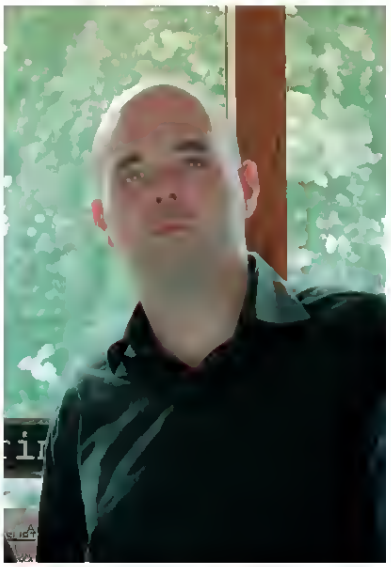
IN THE SHADOW OF BLACK MOUNTAIN
The Apartment House ensemble perform works by artists related to Black Mountain College and the Fluxus movement, such as John Cage, La Monte Young, Alvin Lucier, Philip Corner, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Richard Maxfield, Malcolm Goldstein, James Tenney, Kunsu Shim, Gerhard Stabler, Nam June Paik, Emmet Williams and Jackson Mac Low. Bristol Arnolfini, 14 January, 3pm, £8/£5, 0117 917 2300, www.arnolfini.org.uk

JOHN CALE & BAND
The Ex-Velvet Underground man tours his recent album *blackAcetate* with a straight ahead rock trio. Manchester Academy (24 January), London Garage (25), Bristol Academy (27), Glasgow ABC (28), Gateshead Sage (29), Leicester De Montfort Hall (30), www.john-cale.com

NICK CAVE
The Antipodean singer-songwriter goes out with a scaled down group featuring Bad Seed/Dirty Three violinist Warren Ellis, Martyn Casey on bass and Jim Sclavunos on drums. Birmingham Symphony Hall (30 January), Cambridge Corn Exchange (31), Nottingham Royal Centre (1 February), London Apollo Victoria (2), Edinburgh Playhouse (4), Glasgow Concert Hall (5), Manchester Bridgewater Hall (6), www.nick-cave.com

CLOGS + THE BOOKS
Contemporary classical quartet Clogs join acclaimed sample-heavy songsmiths The Books on a Contemporary Music Network Tour where they will be developing new material together as

PHOTOS: CLEMENS KALISCHER (CAGE); HIROSHI SUGIMOTO; ANNA SCHORI (DAVIES)



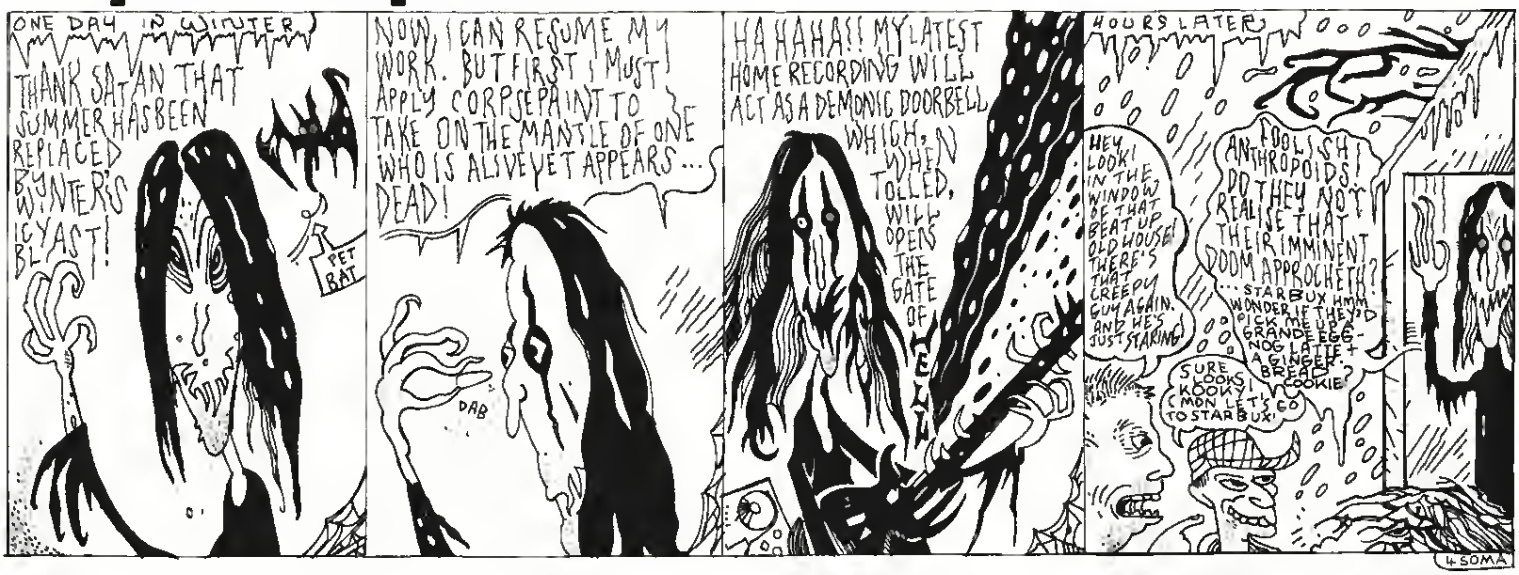
Clogs on tour (left), Rhodri Davies at the Flea Pit

well as playing separately The tour is sponsored by *The Wire*. Bristol Cube Cinema (28 January), Norwich Arts Centre (30), North Yorkshire Shed (31), Glasgow Arches (1 February), Gateshead Sage Gateshead (2), London Luminaire with The Tape vs RQM, Alpha featuring Wendy Stubbs and The Heavy (3), Brighton Dome (4), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (5), www.clogsmusic.com, www.thebooksmusic.com, www.cmntours.org.uk

COLDCUT
Production team Jonathan Moore and Matt Black mark their return with an extensive tour and new album *Sound Mirrors*, released at the end of the month. The duo will be joined at various points by artists who guested on the record, including Roots Manuva, Mpho Skeef, Robert Owens, John Matthias, Saul Williams and Mike Ladd. London Cargo album launch party (19 January), Norwich Waterfront (16 February), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (17), Bexhill De La Warr Pavilion (18), Exeter Lemon Grove (22), Birmingham Custard Factory (23), Manchester Academy 2 (24), London Shepherds Bush Empire (25), Brighton Corn Exchange (19 March), Bristol Academy (20), Gateshead Sage (21), Dublin Village (22), Cardiff Point (24), Sheffield University SU (25), Glasgow Tramway Theatre (26), Winchester Homelands Festival (27 May), www.ninjatune.net/coldcut

RHODRI DAVIES/STEFANO TEDESCO/ JOE WILLIAMSON + PETE MARSH
An evening of improvised music featuring the international harp/vibes/bass trio and a solo set on electric double bass. London The Flea Pit, 19 January, 8·30pm-midnight, £5/£4, 0797 494 0333, www.no-signal.net/desonis

Trip Or Squeek



Pan Sonic (left) in Gateshead; Murcof at Cube Microplex

TAYLOR DEUPREE + RICHARD CHARTIER
Sprawl Club's tenth anniversary event on a boat moored on the River Thames with performances from Brooklyn microsound pioneer and 12K label boss Deupree, sound and installation artist Chartier and club founders Iris Garrelfs and Douglas Benford. London Yacht Club, 12 January, 8-11pm, £8/£6, 020 7836 1566, www.sprawl.org.uk

FARMYARD ANIMAL TRIO FEATURING YUKI & TAKUMA
Jazz-influenced drums, tuba and soprano sax trio present the fruits of a year-long collaboration with Tokyo musicians. London Spitz, 12 January, 8pm, £5, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk, www.theverytinylittlekids.co.uk/animals

GUAPO + CLIVE BELL & DAVE ROSS
Rock complexity outfit supported by *Wire* writer Bell playing Eastern wind instruments in a duo with ex-Kenny Process Team drummer Ross. London Spitz, 15 January, 8pm, £6, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

GARY LUCAS
One-off solo acoustic show from the ex-Beefheart and Magic Band guitarist. London 12 Bar, 29 December, 9pm, £tbc, 020 7240 2120, www.12barclub.com, www.garylucas.com

JOHN METCALFE'S SCORCHING BAY
Ex-Durutti Column viola and guitar player leads an instrumental group which includes members of Red Snapper, The Bays and Duke Quartet. Norwich Arts Centre (17 January), Brighton Komedia (25), www.john-metcalfe.co.uk

PAN SONIC + TAYLOR DEUPREE + RICHARD CHARTIER
Powerful minimal analogue electronics from the Finnish headliners plus hypnotic electronica from the two North American supporting soloists. Gateshead Sage, 13 January, £12, 0191 443 4661, www.thesagegateshead.com, www.no-fi.org.uk

PIANO CIRCUS
The keyboard sextet perform a rare concert on six grand pianos. The programme includes Steve Reich's *Six Pianos*, Terry Riley's *Keyboard Study No 2*, Erkki-Sven Tüür's *Transmission*, a Conlon Nancarrow player-piano transcription and recent works by Graham Fitkin and Yumi Hara Cawkwell. Manchester RNCM, 26 January, 7.30pm, £10, 0161 907 5555, www.rncm.ac.uk, www.pianocircus.com

RICHARD THOMPSON
Fairport Convention founding member back on the road. Warwick Arts Centre (21 January), Perth Concert Hall (23), London Barbican (26), Basingstoke Anvil (27), Cambridge Corn Exchange (30), Reading Hexagon (31), Brighton Dome (1 February), Manchester Bridgewater (3), Liverpool Harmonic Hall (4), York Grand Opera House (5), Blackpool Grand (8), Gateshead Sage (9), Bristol Colston Hall (10), Cardiff St David's Hall (11), Aberystwyth Arts Centre (12), www.richardthompson-music.com

THE TAPE VS RQM + ALPHA FEATURING WENDY STUBBS + THE HEAVY
Headliners combine Berlin IDM and abstract New York hiphop. Support comes from Bristol's Alpha and Curtis Mayfield/Funkadelic hybrid The Heavy. London Spitz, 6 January, 8pm, £7, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

JAH WOBBLE & THE ENGLISH ROOTS BAND
Wobble's bass underpins this new interpretation of old English folk tunes with Liz Carter on vocals, Jean-Pierre Rasle on bagpipes and Chris Cookson on guitar and loops. London 100 Club, 28 January, 7:30pm, £14.50, 020 7636 0933, www.30hertzrecords.com

Club spaces

BOAT-TING
The first concert of the year must be this monthly Improv and Out Rock night with a dash of poetry on a boat moored on the River Thames. Start the year with "Britain's premier surf band" They Came From The Sea, poetry from Resonance FM's Ambrosia Rasputin and top-notch Improv from Roger Turner/Steve Beresford/Alan Tomlinson and Gail Brand/John Edwards/Kay Grant/Steve Noble. London Yacht Club, 2 January, 8pm, £5/£2.50, 020 8670 5094, www.boat-ting.com

CUBE MICROPLEX
Music events at the cross-art form community cinema this month include: matinee and evening concerts of melodic upbeat songs by Herman Dune (8 January); psychedelic folk minstrel Simon Finn whose 'lost' album *Pass The Distance* was recently reissued on David Tibet's Dutro label (19), album launch for Bristol's Mole Harness who layers guitar melancholy with subtle processing (20); solo acoustic set from Groundhogs frontman Tony McPhee (27); Clogs + The Books (28); idiosyncratic North American pop songs from Castanets supported by Devendra Banhart labelmate Jana Hunter (30), www.cubecinema.com

NYE AT CUBE MICROPLEX
See in the new year with live performances from Mexican microhouse artist Murcof plus local acts Bronnt Industries Kapital and My Ambulance Is On Fire, who each provide a live score to silent films. These are complemented by cult films from the Cube archives and eclectic sounds from under_score DJs. Bristol Cube, 31 December, 8pm-2am, £12, 0870 4444 400, www.bristolticketshop.co.uk, www.cubecinema.com

ELECTRONIC LOUNGE MEETS SPRAWL
The sonic arts club Sprawl marks its tenth anniversary with DJ sets in the ICA bar from Scanner, Leaf Records' Tony Morley and club founders Iris Garrelfs and si-cut db. London ICA, 25 January, 8pm-1am, £5/£4, 020 7930 3647, www.ica.org.uk

FREE RADICALS
Monthly Improv club hosts special outing from the London Improvisors' Orchestra. London Red Rose Club, 4 January, 7:30pm, £5/£3, 07778 363492, gerard.tierney@gmail.com

KLINKER NORTH
Improvised music and off the wall performance club featuring Now (6 January), Phil Minton & Hugh Metcalfe (10), Chefa Alfonso/John Edwards/Steve Noble (13), By-Pass Now Open featuring Neil Metcalfe, Marcio Mattos, Loz Speyer and Hugh Metcalfe (17), Ya Basta featuring Parny Wallace, Ian MacLaughlan, Paul Shearsmith, Alan Wilkinson, Giles Perring, Ivor Kallin, Dave Fowler and guest (20), A concert in memory of Hugh Davies with Steve Beresford, The Bohman Brothers, Max Eastley, Roger Turner and others (24), The Small Faeces (27), Simon Picard solo (31). London Sussex, Tuesdays and Fridays, 8.30pm, £5/£3, 020 8806 8216, www.klinkerclub.info

KLINKER SOUTH
Improvised music and off the wall performance club featuring The Small Faeces with Hugh Metcalfe, Jerry Bird, Robin Musgrove and Alex Maguire (5 January), tbc (12), The Sodden Culprits (19), Ian Hinchcliffe plus Denmark quartet Late Night Venture (26). London Ivy House, Thursdays, 8pm, £5/£3, 07971 699 090, www.klinkerclub.info

NYE CROSS CENTRAL WAREHOUSE PARTY
Canvas present Laurent Garnier & François K as part of a nine hour journey through Techno in seven rooms with special guests including Soulwax and Filthy. London King's Cross Freight Depot Canvas Goods Yard, 31 December, 10pm-7am, 020 7833 8301/08700 600 100, info@canvaslondon.net, www.ticketweb.co.uk, www.2manydjs.com

RATIONAL RECORDS
Cecilia presents the Rational review at this month's inter-art social. London Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, 10 January and every first Tuesday of the month, 7pm, £5, 07855 486311, www.rationalrec.org.uk

RAY'S JAZZ
Monthly free improvisation series continues inside this record shop/café with the acoustic guitar duo of John Bisset and Alex Ward. London Ray's Jazz at Foyles, 26 January, 6pm, free, 020 7440 3205, rays@foyles.co.uk

REINVENT'S 2020 VISION NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY
Two floor dance event ushers in 2006 with Leeds artists Liptrick, The Electric Press on decks, FX and laptops, Blend DJs and Andy Whittaker. In the basement underground electronic music from the Ploy crew's Kode 9, MarkOne, DJ Miles, DJ Distinction, ComputerControlledSteppas and U-Basstard. Manchester Dry, 31 December, 9pm, £20/£15, 0161 236 9840/9840, www.drybar.co.uk

Incoming attractions: Battles (left) and Broken Social Scene

SARGASSD:C
Eclectic New Music label Sargasso continues to celebrate its tenth anniversary year with an evening of live, genre-defying music. London Salon Oes Arts, 26 January, 7:30-10 30pm, £5, 020 7589 3668, www.salondesarts org, www.sargasso com

SEED RECDRDS XMAS PARTY
Intelligent Dance Music seasonal rave up with Ardisson, Kansascityprophets, Cursominer, Snapmouth, MoQ and Seed OJs London Spitz, 22 Oecember, 8pm-1am, £3, 020 7392 9032, www seedrecord co.uk, www spitz co uk

Incoming

BATTLES
UK
Post-electronic, post-rock and over here East Coasters renegotiate all that predates them London Luminaire, 16 February, 7 30pm, £10, 020 7372 8668, www eatourownears com

BRDKEN SDCIAL SCENE
UK
Genial (all 17 or so of them) Toronto alt. rock experimentalists. London Mean Fiddler, (10 February), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (13), Manchester Academy (14), Birmingham Academy 2 (15), Leeds Faversham (16), Glasgow Art School (17), Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (19), www arts-crafts ca

KILL YDUR TIMID NDTIDN
UK
This Oundee International festival, which is once again supported by *The Wire*, juxtaposes experimental music, film and art and features Tony Conrad with Nikos Veliotis, Mark Wastell and Angharad Oavies performing *10 years alive on the infinite plane*; Christian Marclay's *SCREEN PLAY* performed by a trio organised by Steve Beresford; Bruce McClure solo and with Hototogisu; Luis Recorder, Sandra Gibson and Oaniel Menche, Kazuo Imai & Atsuhiro Ito; Emma Hart & Ben Orew, and more Film events include expanded cinema pieces such as William Raban's *Oragonal*, Gill Eatherleigh's *Hand Grenade* and Lis Rhodes's *Light Music*; plus showings of Conrad's *The Flicker*, Ken Jacobs's *Magic Lantern* films and Paul Sharits's *Epileptic Seizure Comparison*, and five short film programmes featuring work by Abigail Child, Peter Kubelka, Jud Yalkut, Barry Spinello, Thomas Köner, Takahiko Iimura and more The visual art component includes the exhibition *Word Processor* by Oerek Lodge & The Outy Managers. Oundee Contemporary Arts, 17-19 February, day pass £11/£9, weekend pass £26/£22, 01382 909900, www killyourtimidnotion org

THE UNITED SOUNDS DF ATP
UK
Two weekend festivals in May. The first is curated by Oevendra Banhart, Mudhoney and Yeah Yeah Yeahs and features Comets On Fire and Country Teasers (12-14 May), and the second by Sleater-Kinney, The Shins and Ween (19-21). Each group will perform and curate one day each The festival also hosts a television channel partly programmed by the artists Camber Sands Holiday Camp, 12-14 & 19-21 May, £125 per weekend including self-catering chalet accommodation, www atpfestival.com □

Out There Items for inclusion in the February issue should reach us by Friday 16 December

UK Radio

RESONANCE 104.4 FM

NB Resonance is now scheduled quarterly as of January 2006 The station broadcasts across Central London noon-1am, seven days a week with repeats broadcast outside these times CD quality Web streaming and full listings at www resonancefm com

ADVENTURES IN MDDERN MUSIC
Thursday 8pm Presented by *The Wire* staff

BALLING THE JACK
Tuesday 12 noon Blues with Joe Cushley

BERMUDA TRIANGLE
Thursday midnight Presented by Howard Jacques

BLACK FRIDAY
Friday 10 30pm Death Metal

CLEAR SPDT
Weekdays 7pm Open access slot

COIN ON THE SLOT/ BACK IN YOUR TOWN
Saturday 7 30pm. London Improv

NDSTALGIE YA MBDKA
Saturday 1 30pm

FAR SIDE RADIO
Wednesday 12 noon With Paul Fisher

FIFTY-FIFTY SOUND SYSTEM
Tuesday 11 30pm Old Skool dub & reggae

THE GLASS SHRIMP
Wednesday 5pm. Live sessions

KASH KRISIS
Wednesday 10:30pm. Electro mayhem with Matthew Glamorre and guests

MINING FDR GOLD
Thursday 11pm With Johny Brown

MUSA LUSA
Monday 3.30pm New Portuguese music

OST
Saturday 4.30pm Soundtracks with Jonny Trunk

LATE TO LUNCH WITH OUT TO LUNCH
Wednesday 2pm. With Ben Watson

REAL TIME
Thursday noon With Simon Russell

RED ZERD RADID
Saturday 11pm Noise

RHYTHM INCURSIDNS
Saturday 9 30pm Turntablism

SDLID STEEL
Wednesday 11pm With Coldcut

SDUND PRDJECTING
Friday 5 30pm With Ed Pinsent

THE TRADITIDNAL MUSIC HDUR
Thursday 2pm With Reg Hall

BBC RADIO 1 97–99 FM

GILLES PETERSDN WDRLDWIDE
Sunday 11pm-1am Grooves from all over the shop

BBC RADIO 3 90–93 FM

LATE JUNCTION
Monday-Thursday 10.15-midnight. New music

JAZZ ON 3
Friday 11 30pm-1am
Modern jazz in session and concert

HEAR AND NOW
Saturday 11pm-1am.
New music magazine

MIXING IT
Friday 10 15–11:30pm
Eclectic mix of avant sounds

BBC LANCASHIRE 95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

DN THE WIRE
Saturday 10pm-midnight *The Wire*'s dub columnist Steve Barker mixes it up wildstyle

BBC MERSEYSIDE 95.8 FM, 1485 MW

PMS
Sunday midnight-2am Avant sounds mixed

CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM (MILTON KEYNES)

GARDEN DF EARTHLY DELIGHTS
Friday 10pm-midnight Eclectic avant mix

XFM 104.9 FM (LONDON)

FLD-MDTIDN
Sunday 10pm-midnight. Leftfield electronica

Links to Net radio broadcasts can be found on *The Wire* Website www.thewire.co.uk

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Subscribing to *The Wire* is the best way to get hold of copies of "the most essential music magazine of the contemporary era" (Forced Exposure)

It's a fact: the most exciting and influential developments in music are happening at the fringes of the culture, off the radar of most entrenched music magazines. Unlike other zines, *The Wire* is uncompromising in its mission to dig out the music that really matters, music that makes a difference. Each issue is filled with in-depth coverage of the most radical and innovative musicians (past and present) in the arenas of electronic music, avant rock, HipHop, new jazz, noise, modern composition, traditional musics and beyond. You won't find this kind of infomed mix anywhere else. Don't be without it.

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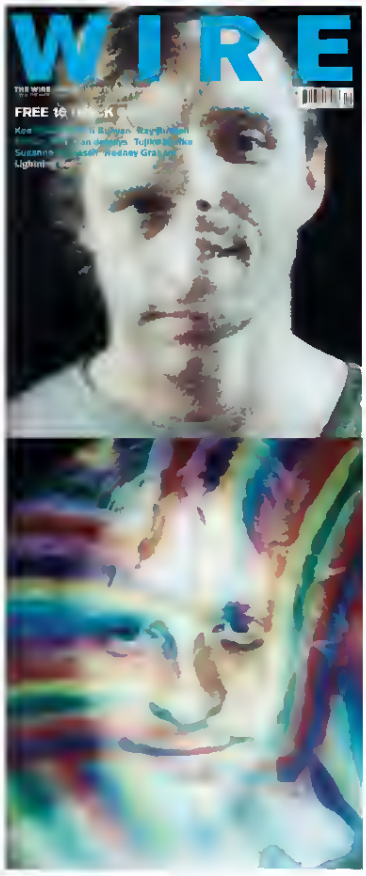
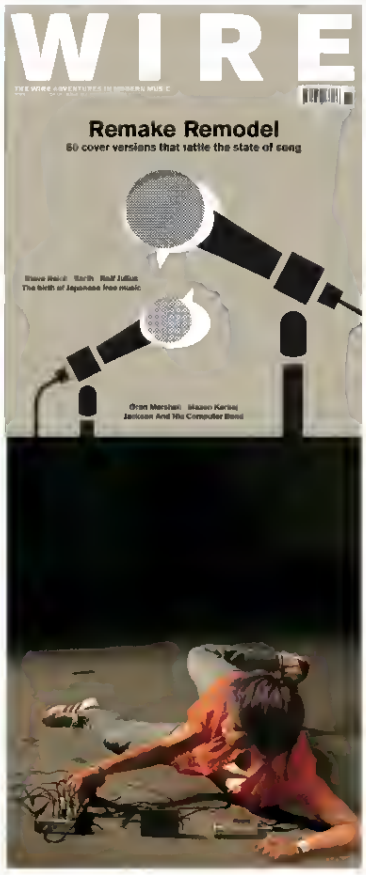
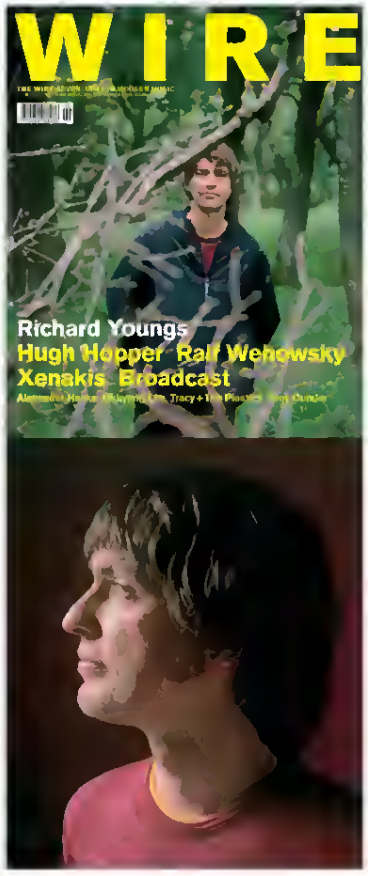






With last year's June issue *The Wire*'s cover price went up to £3.80, which was our first price increase in almost two years. However, our subscription rates remain unchanged, which means subscribing to the magazine is now better value than it has ever been. You can subscribe to *The Wire* online at www.thewire.co.uk or use the form on page 100

The Wire Tapper series

The Wire Tapper is a unique and ongoing series of CDs that are compiled by *The Wire* staff and given away to all our subscribers worldwide with selected issues of the magazine

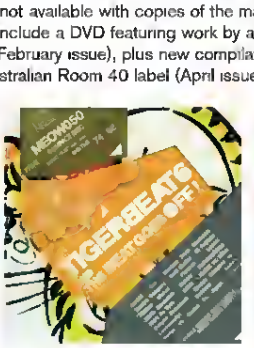
Each CD functions as an accompaniment to the kind of wide-ranging mix of new underground music that gets featured in the pages of *The Wire* each month. Vols 1-5 and Vols 7, 8, 11, 13 and 14 are single CDs, Vols 6, 9, 10 and 12 are double CDs

When you order a subscription to *The Wire* you can opt to receive one of five free introductory packages, four of which include previous volumes in *The Wire Tapper* series – see opposite for details

Subscribers can also get copies of previous volumes in *The Wire Tapper* series with back issue orders – see page 99. The next volume in the series will be given away to all subscribers in summer 2006

More free music...

In addition to *The Wire Tapper* series we regularly collaborate with a variety of labels and organisations to produce special CDs that are given away exclusively to all subscribers worldwide with selected issues (ie they are not available with copies of the magazine sold in shops). Forthcoming discs in this series include a DVD featuring work by artists appearing at the Sonic Acts festival in the Netherlands (February issue), plus new compilations from the Belgian Domino festival (March issue) and the Australian Room 40 label (April issue)



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VEGA/VAIRIO/VAISANEN "MEDAL" **MASS** DEPTH" **MIXMASTER MIKE** "CAN OF ASS KICKS" **SI (CUT) DB VS SCANNER** BOVINE REVOLVER **SCALA** "REMEMBER HOW TO BREATHE" **CORNELIUS** "MIC CHECK" **ROEDELIUS** "DEEP BLUE" **NASSIM MARLOUF** TARAB (KAST) **SOLEX** "ONE LOUDER" SOLEX **KREIDLER** "SHE WOKE UP AND THE WORLD HAD CHANGED **DJ FOOD VS DAVID BYRNE** "FUZZY FREAKY (VA JOE)" **ARTO LINDSAY** "BLUE EYE SHADOW" **SCHREIDER TM** EIWEISS" **RORTER RICKS** "REDUNDANCE (VERSION)" **MIDNIGHT FUNK ASSOCIATION** "WHEN WILL IT END **MIMI** "PIECE OF CAKE" **2RD GEN** MALADY MADE SIMPLE (PRE INTERVENTIONIST VERSION)"

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SLICKER "FRADER" **RHYS CHATHAM** "HARD EDGE (ROUGH MIX)" **ARGELA MEGER & DAVID CUNNINGHAM** "WOOD AND GLASS" **DAF** "ALLES IST GUT" **TOM ZE** DEFECT 2 CURIOSIDADE" **MERIDIEM (PERCY HOWARD/FRED FRITH/BILL LASWELL/CHARLES RAYWARD)** "INTERFERENCE" **IANE DOWE & TERRE THAEMLITZ** 03/07/06 58 **TARWATER** "4 AT" **POWERFIELD** "BLOCK **SAM FREKOP** SHOWROOMS" **PUPPY** HOT JUICE **JAD FAIR & YO LA TENGO** MINNESOTA MAN CLAIMS MONKEY BOWLED PERFECT GAME" **THE PASTELS** "LEAVING THIS ISLAND (JIM O ROURKE REMIX)" **BADAWI** "FINAL WARNING" **LABRANFORD** "V (HAROLD RUDD REMIX)"

THE WIRE TAPPER 3 APRIL 1999 ISSUE 182

SUPERSILENT "4 1 **HIGH RISE** "SADAME" **ROTHKO** "FOR DANNY" **WE** "HIELO" **GAS** "UNTITLED" **TO ROCOCO ROT** "SHE LOVES ANIMALS" **THURSTON MOORE/EVAR PARKER/WALTER PRATI** CHILDREN" **MODEL 500** " IN AND OUT" **PANDIT SHIV KUMAR SHARMA** "TEEN TAAL (EXTRACT)" **KHAN** BROKEN ENGLISH (HOW DO YOU SPELL 9)" **HOOD** IN IRON LIGHT" **RAUL PANHUYSER** PARTITA FOR 18 LONG STRINGS PROPORTIONALLY TUNED (EXTRACT) **ROBERT ASHLEY** "YOUR MONEY MY LIFE GOODBYE (EXTRACT)" **SHEILA CHANDRA** "SHEHNAI SONG" **VOID** "X-FACTOR" **RHYS CHATHAM** "UNTITLED LIVE AT NOW NINETYE"

THE WIRE TAPPER 4 AUGUST 1999 ISSUE 188

FX RANDOMIZ "DISPLATZ" **PIERRE BASTIEN** "ODDVINIL" **SND** "02" **PAN AMERICAN & BJ COLE** "UNTITLED LIVE AT LONDON UNION CHAPEL MAY 1 **VANDERMARK 5** "VENT (FOR GLENN SPEARMAN) **SS + D** "ELEMENTS OF" **ALOG** "DRIFTING WEST" **POWERFIELD** "STEADY STATE" **LOW RES** "MINTY" **CHIEF BAONOKO & HIS BUDU MEN** YANDO" **CLIVE GRAHAM** "ONE END OF THE TIME PAD **DO MAKE SAY THINK** "DR HOOCH" **WARN REFEVER** "TRAIN" **SIGNAL** "ONDULOP" **KLARGSTABIL** "PRONTO LUIGI" **UNIT** "RING WORM" **DANIEL FIGGIS** "ALISON CREAKING"

THE WIRE TAPPER 5 MARCH 2000 ISSUE 193

LABRADFORD "SO /MATMOS REMIX" **STEPHER VITIELLO** "NINE OUT OF TEN" **VAINO/VAISANEN/EIRREIT** "HERZ" **KIMMO POHJONEN** "ANASTAJA" **WIRE** "PINK FLAG/2" **STYLUS** "LAST SEAWEED COLLECTING HUT AT FRESHWATER WEST PART 1 ANGLE" **JOHN WALL** "CONSTRUCTION 1 STATI UNT/DIST (EXTRACT) **CURD DUCA** QUIET NIGHTS INTRO/QUIET NIGHTS" **FERNESZ/O RDURKE/REHBERG** GURTEL ZWEI" **I M SDRE VS NOISE CAMP** "THE REST OF" **DARIEL GIVENS** "VIADUCT" **ARNE NORDHEIM** "FONOPONIER **YO LA TENGO** OUR WAY TO FALL (LIVE) **VERT** PART 4 **AESOP QUARTET** "EGYPTIAN KNIGHTS **MIRA CALIX** "SKIN WITH ME **FUSNITSUSHA** "DON'T BE AFRAID EVEN IF YOUR NERVES SNAP YOU CAN TIE THEM TO A FRAGMENT OF THE UNIVERSE."

THE WIRE TAPPER 6 OCTOBER 2000 ISSUE 200

CD 1
THE FALL "DIT FUCK'S LETTER" **FLANGER** "ROSCO'S DISPOSABLE DRIVER" **SUSUMU YOKOTA** "KODOMOTACHI" **RAH BLAKE** "NICA'S DREAM" **CHRISTIAN MARCLAY/OTOMO YOSHIHIDE** "HYOUSHI" **SENSATIONAL** "PAPER CHASE" **OENENAL MAGIC** RECHENEXE" **RAN SONIC** "KIERTO" **JAR IELINEK** THEY THEM **POIRE Z** "HAIRLESS HANDLE **HIM** "UNTITLED LIVE AT THE EMPTY BOTTLE, CHICAGO **DAVID GRUBBS** "STANWELL PERPETUAL **TRIO NURRICANE+1** "INITIATION (EXCERPT) **ARGUS MACLISE** "UNIVERSAL MUTANT #3" **GLASS CAGE** "BOX CRUSHED FLAT"

CD 2
NURSE WITH WOUND "PFL (DEAMBULATION MIX)" **FAUST** "SO FAR (ALTERNATE)" **IONN FAHEY** "DREAM OF THE ORIGIN OF THE FRENCH BROAD RIVER **NILS EKLARD** STRAUM **COIL** "A COLD CELL" **IANEK SCHAEFER** ACCIDENT ASSISTANT" **CURRENT NINETY THREE** "RED HAWTHORN TREE" **DIVAR GASPARYAN** "NAZANI" **FEANUT BUTTER WOLF FEATURING RASCO** "RUN THE LINE (MARK 45 KING MIX) **I-SOUND** FOLDED **BITTONI C & SHICUTLDB** "RECYCLED 200" **C-SCHULZ & HARSCH** "6" **TOM RECCHION** "GENTLEWOMANLY GRACE **PLURAMON** "SELF REMIX" **HEA MANN NITSCH** "NIGHT MUSIC (STRING QUINTETT) DAY 5 AUGUST 8 1999 1 30 AM/DAY OF DIONYSUS IMPERATIVE EXCESS (DAY 3) EXTRACT AUGUST 5 1999 3:00 PM"

THE WIRE TAPPER 7 MAY 2001 ISSUE 207

FOUR TET "GLUE OF THE WORLD" **PULSEPROGRAMMING** "TO THE EXPERT EYE ALONE **DARIEL FIGGIS** DROOL'S HOLDINGS/MUDDER/THE LIGHT AGAIN **IIN HI KIM** "EK FOR JC (EXCERPT)" **KIM RIDRTHOY** "DET BLEV FEL" **ANTIBALAS AFROBEAT ORCHESTRA** "UPRISING" **BIGG JUS** "GAFFELING WHIFFS" **NOLTE** 21ST CENTURY SCHIZOID MAN OR HOW TO LOSE YOUR HEAD BABY" **STEINBÜCHEL** LOST THINGS WE FOUND BORROWED AT THE END OF LAST WEEK" **MICE PARADE** "INTO THE FREEDOM PART 3" **ILLUSION OF SAFETY** "STILL-CINE" **MORKS OF THE MONASTERY OF GYÜTÖ TIBET** "LE GRAND NOIR (MAHAKALA) (EXCERPT)" **EARDRUM** "UNTITLED" **LASSE MARHAUG** "POLAR" **MAX NAGL/EDWARD GOREY FEATURING JULIE TIPPETTS** "THE DISRESPECTFUL SUMMONS"

THE WIRE TAPPER 8 JANUARY 2002 ISSUE 215

23 SKIDOO "KUNDALINI **JAH WOBBLE & TEMPLE OF SOURD** "SHOUT AT THE DEVIL" **CORNELIUS** "POINT OF VIEW POINT" **FOG** "PNEUMONIA" **GOODHEART ALLER ROWELL TRIO** HARD COUNT" **CHAS SMITH** "GATE 5" **MICHAEL I DR FINK** "ECHO" **MURCDF** "MO" **ELECTRELANE** "GABRIEL" **RO NECK BLUES BAND** "THE NATURAL BRIDGE" **SET FIRE YO FLAMES** "OMAHA " **WORNSHOP** FUR WEN? **SMALL ROCKS** CLODHOPPER" **THE RIP-OFF ARTIST** "STUFFING BOX" **NOXAGT** "POWERCHILD" **VARIDUS** "HELVITIS SYMPHONY NO 1 FOR 13 GUITARISTS" **XINLI SUPREME** "KYONO"

THE WIRE TAPPER 9 NOVEMBER 2002 ISSUE 226

CD 1
LIARS "GROWN MEN DON'T FALL IN THE RIVER JUST LIKE THAT" **THEMSELVES** "HAT IN THE WIND" **TARWATER** "70 RUPIES TO PARADISE ROAD" **MUM** "WE HAVE A MAF OF THE PIANO" **BADAWI** "EVOCATION" **SUICIDE** "SWEARIN' TO THE FLAG **SUPERSILENT** "C 4 1" **POLWECHSEL/FENNESZ** "FRAMING X (RECONSTRUCTED BY PATRICK PULSINGER) **WAZAHUGY** "UNTITLED" **ASA CHANG & JURRAY** TSUGINEPU TO ITTEMITA **DEADBEAT** "ORGAN IN THE ATTIC SINGS THE BLUES" **VADIM** TILL SUNS IN YOUR EYE" **THE OXES** HORSES R OK (PRISON AND I WENE IN A B WAY MIX BY CEX)" **SAGAN** "JASPUN/PLUSONE" **LEAFCUTTER JOHN** "MANDOUN WORK (EDIT)" **SUN** "PLACH FOR THE SKY (PLURAMON REMIX)"

CD 2
MAR TUNDRA "MASTERED BY GUY AT THE EXCHANGE" **WIRE** "SPENT" **SONIC YOUTH/ICR/THE EX** "III" **SIGUR RÓS** "UNTITLED" **JOHN FAHEY** "RED CROSS DISCIPEE OF CHRIST TODAY (FOR GUITAR ROBERTS" **A SMALL GOOD THING** "A MIGHTY STILLNESS (REMIX)" **THE SEA AND CAKE** LEFT SIDE CLOUDED" **MASHA QRELLA** "I WANT YOU TO KNOW **DICTAPHONE** THE E SONG **PULSEPROGRAMMING** "BLOOMS EVENTUALLY" **ELECTRELARE** "THIS DEED **ELLERY ESKELIN WITH ANDREA PARKINS & JIM BLACK** "43 RPM **JIMMY LYONS TRIO** "JUMP UP **AMON TOBIN** "EL WRAITH" **D'ARCANGELO** ALL THAT J"

THE WIRE TAPPER 10 OCTOBER 2003 ISSUE 236

CD 1
GUIDO MÖBIUS "NELLES" **ALIAS** "BEGINAGAIN" **ARIMAL COLLECTIVE** "BAT YOU'LL FLY" **MAHER SHALAL HASH BAZ** "POST OFFICE" **SKETCH SHOW** "CHRONOGRAPH" **KIM HIORTHOY** "TRACK 5" **MICE PARADE** FOCUS ON THE ROLLER COASTER **COLLEEN** EVERYONE ALIVE WANTS ANSWERS" **THEMSELVES** "GOOD PEOPLE CHECK (HRVATSKI REMIX) **LOREN CONNORS & DAVID GRUBBS** "BLOSSOM TIME" **POLMO POLPO** "LIKE HEARTS SWELLING (EDIT) **FAUST & DÄLEK** "7 ELECTRONIQUE" **FOUR TET** "SPIRIT FINGERS **ROB ELLIS** "MUSIC FOR THE HOME NO 4 – CHURCH OPPOSITE" **DAVID SYLVIAN** A FIRE IN THE FOREST"

CD 1
HEAT SENSOR FEATURING M SAYYID "GRAVY" **GÜNTER MÜLLER & TOSHIMARU NARAMURA** " TINT" **STAFRÆNN HÅKON** "TÅLKN" **SCHLAMMPEITZIGER** "FRA DIGITALER VOLKSSTUHLHANGER **IAH WOBBLE** "JUST ME AND PHIL **LAIBACH** "WAR" **LUMEN** "STRANDED" **SATORU WONO** "OVERTURE" **UI** "BACK UP" **ERIK FRIEDLANDER** MAY IT PLEASE HEAVEN" **SUSARRA AND THE MAGICAL BARD** "BELIEVER" **CLOGS** WHO S DOWN NOW" **SAGOR & SWING** "ALLA SAGOR HAR ETT SLUT" **SAFARICRONOCULTSHOR** ANOREXIA GAS BALLOON (REPRISE)" **DAVID GRUBBS** "THE NAME OF ECSTASY"

THE WIRE TAPPER 11 JUNE 2004 ISSUE 244

TO ROCOCO ROT "MISS YOU" **ICARUS** "ANTZ NEZ (EDIT)" **JUARA MOLIRA** "MARTÍN FIERRO" **WIBUTEE** "1 800-SKAUEN" **PHILIP CLEMO** "DEPTH (EDIT)" **ALBERT AYLER** "UNTITLED BLUES **CHRIS MCGREGOR & THE BRDTHERHODD OF BREATH** "THE BRIDE (EDIT)" **MATTHEW DEAR** "TIDE" **IAH WOBBLE** "ELEVATOR MUSIC 3 **ARTHUR RUSSELL** "YOU HAVE DID THE RIGHT THING WHEN YOU PUT THAT SKYLIGHT IN **HERRIK RYLANDEA** "FORCED LAUGH" **GREEN MILK FROM THE PLANET ORANGE** "SWEET 6 AM (EDIT)" **MOUNTAINS** MOUNTAINS (EDIT)" **SLOWBLOW** "CARDBOARD BOX" **UN CADDIE RENVERSE DANS L'HERBE** WWW.NONPHILO.ORG" **PDIRE_Z + RHIL MIRTON** O QDER Z"

THE WIRE TAPPER 12 DECEMBER 2004 ISSUE 250

CD 1
DANIEL BIRO & ROB PALMER "THE LONG JOURNEY HOME PART 2 (EXTRACT)" **SITHEAD** "TO HAVE AND TO HOLD" **EARK PSYCHOSIS** "FROM WHAT IS SAID TO WHEN IT'S READ (EDIT)" **ATELEIA & DAVID DANIELL** "FTP" **ANDY MOOR & YANNIS KYRIAKIDES** "3 LOSED T **BURNT FRIEDMAN & THE NU DUB PLAYERS** FUCK BACK (3:58 VERSION) **AESOP ROCK** "FAST CANS DANGER FIRE AND KNIVES" **PITA** "RESOG 45 **VIDLET** "PRIZNAK ALUMINIUM" **MICHAELA MELIAN** BRAUTLIED (EDIT)" **CHAS SMITH** "FALSE SECURITY OF NUMBERS" **MARTIN ARCHER** IT DON'T HOTHE R ME/WHE RE S MIKE?" **HENRY GRIMES TRIO** FLOWERS FOR ALBERT" **THE NECKS** MOSQUITO (EXCERPT)" **@C** INT 10/94" **ASCDTARE** "CRUCIBLE PROCESS" **MATTHEW BURTNER** "D2 (EDIT)" **STEPHANE RIVES** "EBRANLEMENT 2" **ERGD PHIZMIZ** "STICKY WHITE GLUE (EXTRACT) RECTIFY" **THE FALL** "BLINDNESS"

CD 2
CUL DE SAC/DAMO SUZUKI "BERLIN 6" **MEADOW HOUSE** "TIT FOR TAT" **MILKY GLDEE** "THE WARP AND THE WOOF" **STAAPLAAT SOUNDSYSTEM** "NO TIME FOR SPACE" **IASON RANN & GUNTER MÜLLER** "TENTH RUNK" **ANDREW PEKLER** "WAI" **CARTER TUTTI** "UNREALITY (EDIT)" **DJ / RUPTURE FEATURING SISTER RANCY** "LITTLE MORE OIL **BURNT SUGAR VS THE DOMINATRIX** "DOMINATA (REMIX BY QASIM NAQVI & KEITH WITTY)" **AM/PM** "THE ENDS (13)" **DAVID GRUBBS & NIKOS VELIOTIS** "THE HARMLESS DUST (EXCERPT)" **GARY LUCAS & IOZEF VAN WISSEM** "A HAWK FROM A HANDSAW" **BONNIE PRINCE BILLY & MATT SWEENEY** "BED IS FOR SLEEPING **DAMOR & NAQMI** "BEAUTIFUL CLOSE DOUBLE" **FAX & ALEX AYULI** "REBELBOUND" **ARA DA SILVA** "THE LIGHTHOUSE **CHRISTIAN RENOU** "EX VOTO (WIRE-FM MIX" **ENIGMA DEVICE** "REUNIFIED" **SHINING** "GORETEX WEATHER REPORT" **M BENTLEY** "PIANO SHIP (ALTERNATIVE MIX)"

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HANNE RUKKELBERG "EASE" **MANDANIN MOVIE** "THE GREEN GIRAFFE" **ALEXANDER HACKE** "SONNTAG" **MATT ELLIOTT** "WHAT'S WRONG" **I UANA MOLIRA** "SALVESE QUIEN PUEDA JUANA'S EPIC RE VERSION (EDIT)" **PICASTRO** TOW TRUCK" **DEVIATIONISTS** "SWEETEST CHARMS" **KID606** "PHOENIX RIDDIM **ARIEL PINK'S HAUNTED GRAFFITI** "JULES LOST HIS JEWELS **JORN SURMAN** "WAY BACK WHEN PART 4 **NICK CASTRO** "SUN SONG" **LUNKBOY** SHADOW AND ACT **AKINORI** RED FIELD" **CURRITUCK CO** "SLEEPWALKING 1" **BOMBAY 1** "MORE THAN EVERYTHING" **RAJO** "WAR IS DEAD" **CRIMETIME ORCHESTRA** "LIFE IS A BEAUTIFUL MONSTER PART 1" **PORT-ROYAL** "FLARES PART 3" **FOVEA HEX** "DON'T THESE WINDOWS OPEN? (TRUE INTERVAL OFFERING)" **TU M** "WHAT YOU SAY?"

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OREN MARSHALL "6 (EDIT)" **DIRTY PROJECTORS** "I WILL TRUCK (EDIT) **SECRET MOMMY** DANCE STUDIO (EQIT)" **CAGE** "GOOD MORNING" **RAY RUSSELL** GOODBYE SVENGALI (EDIT)" **KIERAN HEBDEN & STEVE REIO** "SOUL OSCILLATIONS (EXCERPT)" **BLACK TO COMM** "LACCIFER LACCA" **COBRA KILLER** "HIGH IS THE PAIN" **GERRT MITCHELL & LITTLE SPARTA** "PEASTING ON MY HEART **XXL** "PAW PAW PAW PAW PAW PAW PAW PAW" **MERZ** WARM CIGARETTE ROOM **HANS FJELLESTAD** WRIGGLING CALF **NELS CLINE/WALLY SNOUP/CHRIS CORSANO** "LAKE OF FIRE MEMORIES" **AR GREY KIRITCHENKO** "SCOPE OF MY PERCEPTION (EQIT)" **THIS HEAT** "24 TRACK LOOP" **MORA** "(CS)"

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192 **Quannum Projects**, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Jonathan Harvey, The Primer: North Indian Music, Kid Koala, Lemmy's Jukebox, Ultra-red, Dave Pajo
193 **Wire**, Rashied Ali, Richard H Kirk, Bill Laswell's Jukebox, Vladislav Delay, Haco, Kimmo Pohjonen, Tara Jane O'Neil
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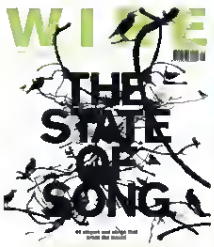

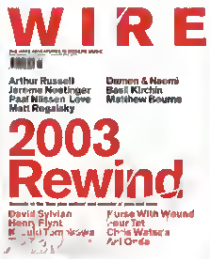

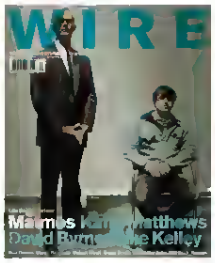

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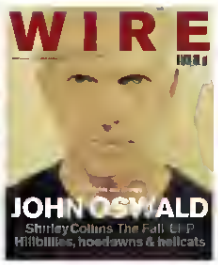

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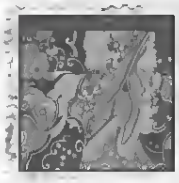

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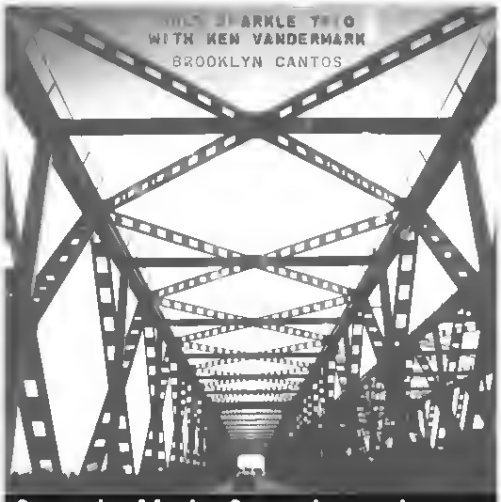

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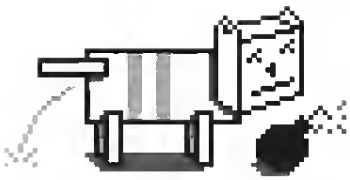

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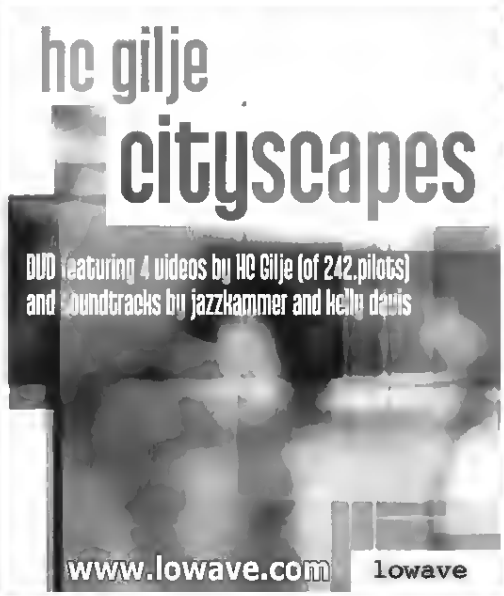

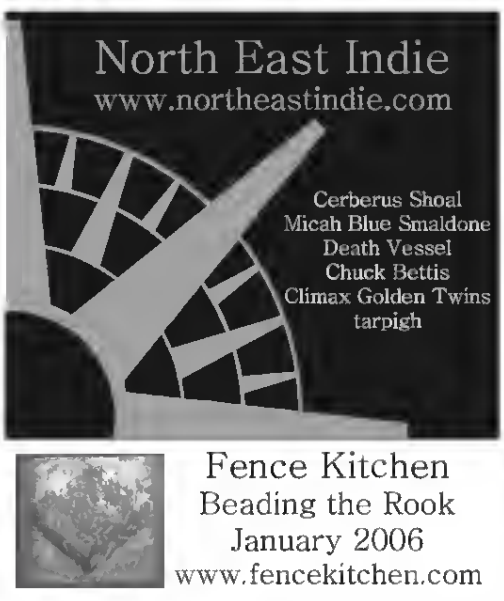

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Epiphanies

Ten years after being inspired to present electronic music on a human scale, Iris Garrelfs and Douglas Benford look back on the revelations of London's Sprawl club

Licence to Sprawl: past evidence of future possibilities

Perhaps it's a cliche that many ideas are dreamed up in drinking dens. In the case of The Sprawl, it's true. Wind back to late 1995 in London. Iris Garrelfs, a transplanted German, was working as a photographer, studying sound engineering and switching from performing music in prison officers' clubs to recording electronics as BitTonic. Douglas Benford had a day job as a magazine designer (churning out fishing titles, if you really must know), keeping himself sane at night by running the Suburbs Of Hell label, and creating his own music under various guises, primarily si-{cut}.db.

The background to this time was the social melee of Robin Rimbaud's Electronic Lounge at the ICA (a major influence, not just on ourselves), Sunday afternoons at The Big Chill, nights at the Rumpus Rooms, Anokha and Metalheadz, the rise of the Internet, and contemporary composers such as Xenakis referring to DJ culture. Electronica was sizzling with excitement as drum 'n' bass, and subgenres such as IDM, drill 'n' bass, Illbient, and all sorts of warped sounds were impacting. Creative possibilities seemed endless, and we really wanted to hear it all – as often as possible, and with like-minded people. Then, one cold November evening in a dingy Kentish Town pub, where Iris had arranged for us to play a small performance, we realised that nobody was going to do it for us.

The concert wasn't all that well attended, but we did get a nice turnout of musician pals. We were excited and imagined further activities, possibly a regular event. Days later we migrated to another pub to discuss practicalities. Iris came up with the name Sprawl, after William Gibson's *Sprawl* trilogy, suggesting future technologies, unhealthy tentacled growth and off-corporate shenanigans. We felt that Sprawl ought to take place somewhere contemporary, implying these future possibilities. In late 1995 we discovered maybe three or four 'Internet cafes' in the whole of London – and after some scouting trips, we settled on Cafe Internet in Victoria, London, not far from Buckingham Palace.

DJ Spooky headlined our first ever night, in town to play at an LMC festival. Not a bad start – the venue certainly had never been that busy! There's no doubt that Cafe Internet, which we used for about a year, had its problems: no sound system, so we had to hire a PA; slightly philistine managers, who enjoyed the bar takings, but had little sympathy with the music. But we liked the shiny computers and folk checking mails and playing games. Of course, there had to be a neighbour complaining about the noise, despite us finishing at 11:30pm. This ended up with the farcical situation of local council noise inspectors standing next to the speakers during an almost silent set by Sprawl perennial Simon Fisher Turner, trying to pick up any kind of reading on their meters. Simon had decided to 'go microsound' in sympathy with us.

We soon learnt that audiences were not always easy to attract. In those early days we had a steady stream of artists headliners: Spring Heel Jack, Talvin Singh, Andrew Weatherall, Kaffe Matthews, David Cunningham and Scanner, as well as various artists connected to Warp, Planet Mu, Ninja Tune, Leaf, Swim, Clear, Language, Lo, Dot, etc, plus a complement of lesser-knowns. Many an artist returned as listener on later occasions, and many a listener mutated into performer. A typical Sprawl night also incorporated non-musical aspects, with visuals from D-Fuse and Waveform Graphics, an exhibition by Designers Republic, plus the occasional CD-ROM/Website launches, generative software demos, and Internet broadcasts. We even published our own mini-magazine and initially issued membership cards (card number one has just been unearthed in Japan!).

A year or so later, the first venue was upgraded to the more sympathetic Global Cafe, another Net cafe in Golden Square, Soho. This had an in-house PA, a suitcase-sized video projector and a great atmosphere, though we would always be fighting with blown speakers (apologies to Vladislav Delay), chancers running in and stealing the door takings, and corporate double-bookings. Memories of the six years or so here include steamed-up windows, cinematic visuals, with varied audiences of hushed awe or indifferent endless chat over the music – but then we always did enjoy the social side. (Douglas would also like to apologise to Jamie Lidell for not knowing who he was and refusing him entrance, as he didn't have the cash to get in... forcing him to sit forlornly on the pavement.)

Come 2000, the UK electronica flux seemed to burn out of ideas. Driven by our own personal leanings, we veered towards to the German scene, especially Berlin and Cologne, but also sounds and improvisations emanating from other parts of Europe, San Francisco, Canada and Australia. Our taste today has found common ground with other London based organisations – the London Musicians Collective, Sonic Arts Network and Resonance FM.

Personal mini-epiphanic musical moments for us have included (in no particular order): Oren Ambarchi, Mapstation with Soul Static Sound's 'D', Rosy Parlane, Minit, Stephan Mathieu, Rothko, Vert, Janek Schaefer, Steve Beresford, Curd Duca, Jem Finer, Sutekh, Paul Hood, Peter Cusack, Un Caddie Renverse Dans L'herbe, Bohman Bros, Akira Rabelais and Matt Rogalsky. The list is endless. Other memories: Antye Greie-Fuchs's wonderful vocals in Laub mode; bumping into Baby Ford at Ikea and twisting his arm into doing a set for us; a brief burst of beautiful static by Kim Cascone before his computer crashed; Mattin's equally brief but fab windtunnel of audio.

It is rather sad that after ten years, with the proliferation of DJ bars with mostly mono soundsystems, there are still very few venues in London that cater to smaller, non-rock events. On two occasions now we have visited venues to confirm the following week's Sprawl only to find that the place is just about to be demolished or closed down (RIP Global Cafe and The Lifthouse). Hence it has been refreshing to do a few extra-curricular Sprawls – our first festival, Compass, at the Cockpit Theatre in 1997, followed by the Groundswell event at the ICA, and the Interplay mini-festival at the Spitz (which we plan to tour through and outside the UK next year). We have always tried to keep our monthly Sprawl events simple and self-financing; it's still important to us to have somewhere sympathetic to try out new ideas, somewhere new artists can grow into performing live without the pressure of attracting vast audiences.

Many more people have started making music as software and laptops have become more powerful, gone are the days when an artist would haul in a desktop PC. Small labels, CD-R releases and MP3s have proliferated – and music sales have tailed off. As artists have become more mobile, they are also more transportable, thanks to the growth of budget airlines.

Wanting to tap into the zeitgeist of the electronic music scene on our own terms was, looking back on it, a leap into the unknown. Little did we realise that ten years later we would still be in transit: music tastes have changed, the landscape has evolved, but our initial urge to keep our ears open for new sounds remains intact. □ *The Sprawl Tenth Anniversary concert, with Taylor Deupree and Richard Chartier, is on 12 January at London's Yacht Club. On 25 January, Sprawl team up with Scanner's Electronic Lounge at London ICA. Information: www.sprawl.org.uk*

The Wire T-shirts 2005

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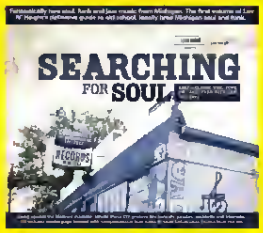

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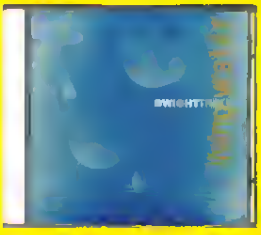
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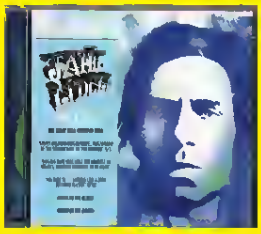
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